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A GALLOWAY HERD

S. R. CROCKETT

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A GALLOWAY HERD

BY

S. R. CROCKETT

AUTHOR OF

"THE LILAC SUNBONNET," "THE RAIDERS," "THE STICKIT MINISTER,"
"BOG, MYRTLE AND PEAT," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK
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A GALLOWAY HERD.

CHAPTER I.

THE MINISTER'S FUNERAL.

"WEEL, he's won awa'!"

"Ay, ay, he is that!"

The minister's funeral was winding slowly out of the little manse loaning. The window-blinds were all down, and their bald whiteness, like sightless eyes looking out of the white-washed walls and the trampled snow, made the Free Church Manse of Deeside no cheerful picture that wild New Year's day. The green gate that had hung on one hinge, periodically mended ever since the minister's son broke the other swinging on it the summer of the dry year before he went to college, had swayed forward with a miserably forlorn lurch, as though it too had tried to follow the funeral procession of the man who had shut it carefully every night for forty years.

Andrew Malcolm, the Glencairn joiner, who was conducting the funeral—if, indeed, Scotch funerals

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can ever be said to be conducted—had given it a push to let the rickety hearse have plenty of sea room between the granite pillars. It was a long and straggling funeral, silent save for the words that stand at the opening of this chapter, which ran up and down the long black files like the irregular fire of skirmishers.

"Ay, mon, he's won awa' !"

"Ay, ay, he is that !"

This is the Scottish Lowland "coronach," characteristic and expressive as the wailing of the pipes to the Gael or the keening of women among the wild Eirionach.

"We are layin' the last o' the auld An'ersons o' Deeside amang the mools (earth) the day," said Saunders M'Quhirr, the farmer of Drumquhat, to his friend, Rob Adair, of the Mains of Deeside, as they walked sedately together, neither swinging his arms as he would have done on an ordinary day. Saunders had come over Dee Water to follow the far-noted man of God to his rest.

"There's nae siccan men nooadays as the An'ersons o' Deeside," said Rob Adair, with a kind of pride and pleasure in his voice. "I'm a dale aulder than you, Saunders, an' I mind weel o' the faither o' him that's gane." Rob had the curious South country disinclination to speak directly of the dead, perhaps the same feeling of which Mr. Louis Stevenson has such strange stories to tell in his Pacific voyages.

"Ay, an angry man he was that day in the '43 when him that's a corp the day left the kirk an' manse that his faither had pitten him intil only the year afore. For, of coorse, the Lairds o' Deeside

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war the pawtrons o' the pairish, an' when the auld laird's yae son took into his heid to be a minister, it was in the natur' o' things that he should get the pairish.

"Weel, the laird didna speak to his son for the better part o' twa year, though mony a time he drave by to the Pairish Kirk when his son was haudin' an ootdoor service at the Auld Wa's whaur the three roads meet, for nae *sicht* could they get on a' Deeside for kirk or manse, for frae the Dullarg to Craig Ronald a' belanged to the laird. The minister sent the wife an' bairns to a sma' hoose in Cairn Edward, an' lodged himsel' amang sic o' the fermers as werena feared for his faither's factor. Na, an' speak the auld man wadna, for the very dourness o' him, even though the minister wad say to his faither, 'Faither, wull ye no' speak to yer ain son?' no' yae word wad he answer, but pass him as though he hadna seen him, as muckle as to say, 'Nae son o' mine!'

"But a week or twa efter the minister had lost twa nice bairns wi' the scarlet fivvur, his faither an' him forgethered at the fishin' whaur he had gane, thinkin' to jook the sair thocts that he carried aboot wi' him, puir man. They were baith keen fishers an' graun' at it. The minister was for liftin' his hat to his faither an' gaun by, but the auld man stood still in the middle o' the fit-pad wi' a gye queer look in his face.

"'Wattie,' he said, an' for yae blink the minister thoct that his faither was gaun to greet, a thing that he had never seen him do in all his life, but he dinna greet. 'Wattie,' says he, 'hae ye a huik?'

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"Ay, Saunders, that was a' he said, an' the minister juist gied him the huik an' the twa o' them never said *Disruption* mair as lang as they leeved.

"'Ye had better see the factor aboot pittin' up a meetin' hoose and a decent dwallin', gin ye hae left Kirk an' Manse!'

"That was a' that the auld laird ever said."

CHAPTER II.

WHAT SAUNDERS M'QUHIRR SAW IN LONDON.

"Ay, he's been a sair tried man in his time, your minister, but he's a' by wi't the day," continued Saunders M'Quhirr, as they trudged behind the hearse.

"Did I ever tell you, Rob, aboot seein' young Walter—his boy that gaed wrang, ye ken—when I was up i' Lunnon the year afore last. Na; 'deed I telled naebody bena' the mistress. It was nae guid story to tell on Deeside!

"I was up, as ye ken, at Barnet Fair wi' some wunter beas', sae I bade a day or twa in Lunnon, doin' what sma' business I had, an' seein' the sichts as weel, for its no' ilka day that a Deeside body fin's themsel's i' Lunnon.

"Yae nicht wha should come in but a Cairn Edward callan' that ser'd his time in the *Gazette* office. He had spoken to me at the show, pleased to see a Gallawa' face, nae doot; and he telled me

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he was mairriet an' workin' on the *Times*. An' amang ither things back an' forrit he telled me that the minister o' Deeside's son was here. 'But,' says he, 'I'm feared that he's comin' to nae guid.' I kenned that the laddie hadna been hame to his faither an' his mither for a maitter o' maybe ten year, so I thocht that I wad like to see the lad for his faither's sake. So in a day or twa I got his address frae the reporter lad, an' fand him efter a lang seek doon in a gye queer place no' far frae where Tammas Carlyle leeves near the water side. I thocht that there was nae ill bits i' Lunnon but in the East End; but I learned different.

"I gaed up the stair o' a wee brick hoose nearly tummlin' doon wi' its ain wecht—a perfect rickle o' brick—an' chappit. A lass opened the door efter a wee, no' that ill-lookin', but toosy aboot the heid an' unco shilpit (pale) aboot the face.

"'What do you want?' says she, verra sherp an' clippit in her mainner o' speech.

"'Does Walter An'erson o' Deeside bide here?' I askit, gye an' plain, as ye ken a body has to speak to they Englishers that barely can understan' their ain language.

"'What may you want with him?' says she.

"'I come frae Deeside,' says I—no' that I meaned to lichtly my ain pairish, but I thocht that the lassie micht no' be acquaint wi' the name o' Whunnyliggate. 'I come frae Deeside, an' I ken Walter An'erson's faither.'

"'That's no recommend,' says she.

"'The mair's the peety,' says I, 'for he's a daicent man.'

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"So she took ben my name that I had nae cause to be ashamed o', an' syne she brocht word that I was to step in. So ben I gaed, an' it wasna a far step, eyther, for it was juist yae bit garret room; an' there on a bed in the corner was the minister's laddie, lookin' nae aulder than when he used to swing on the yett an' chase the hens. At the verra first glint I gat o' him I saw that Daith had come to him and come to bide. His countenance was barely o' this earth—sair disjaskit an' no' manlike ava'—mair like a lassie far gane in a decline; but raised-like too, an' wi' a kind o' defiance in it, as if he war darin' the Almichty to His face.

"Man, Rob, I houp I may never see the like again."

"Ay, man, Saunders, ay, ay," said Rob Adair, who being a more demonstrative man than his friend, had been groping in the tail of his "blacks" for the handkerchief that was in his hat, then forgetting what he was searching for in the interest of the story, he walked for a considerable distance with his hand deep in the pocket of his tail coat.

The farmer of Drumquhat proceeded on his even way.

"The lassie that I took to be his wife (but I asked no quastions) was awfu' different ben the room wi' him, frae what she was wi' me at the door—fleechin' like wi' him to tak' a sup o' soup, an' when I gaed forrit to speak to him on the puir bit bed, she cam' by me an' the water was happin' off her cheeks like hail in a simmer thunner shoo'er."

"Puir bit lassockie," said Rob Adair, who had three daughters of his own at home, making another

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absent-minded and unsuccessful search for his handkerchief. "There's a smurr o' rain beginnin' to fa', I think," he said, apologetically.

"'An' you're Sandy MacWhurr frae Drumquhat,' says the puir lad on the bed. 'Are your sugar plums as guid as ever?'"

"What a quastion, Saunders," said Rob.

"'Deed ye may say it. Weel, frae that he gaed on talkin' aboot hoo Fred Robinson and him stole the hale o' the Drumquhat plooms yae back-end, an' hoo they gat as far as the horse waterin'-place wi' them when the dowgs got efter them. He thriepit that it was me that set them on, but I never did that, though I didna conter him. They made for the seven-fit march dyke, but hadna time to mak' ower it, sae had to sit on the tap o' a thorn bush in the meadow on their hunkers, wi' the dowgs fair loupin' an' howlin' to get haud o' them, till I came doon mysel' an' garred them turn every pooch oot-side in. He minded, too, that I was for hingin' them baith up by the heels till what they had etten followed what had been in their pooches. A' this he said juist as he did whan he wad hae comed ower to hae a bar wi' the lassies in the forenichts efter he cam' hame frae the college the first year; but lauchin' a' the time in a wey I didna like, it wasna natural—something hard an' frae the teeth oot, as yin micht say, maist peetifu' in a callant like him, wi' the deid lichts shinin' in the blue een o' him."

"D'ye no' mind, Saunders, o' him comin' hame frae the college wi' a hantel o' medals an' prizes?" said Rob Adair, breaking in as if he felt that he must contribute his share to the memories which

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shortened if they did not lighten their road. "His faither was rael prood o' him, though it wasna his way to say muckle; but his mither could talk aboot naething else, an' carriet the medals aboot wi' her a' ower the pairish in her wee black recktical basket. Fegs, a gipsy wife, gat a saxpence juist for speerin' for a sicht o' them."

"Weel," continued Saunders, imperturbably continuing the thread of his narrative, "I let the lad rin on i' this wey for a while, an' then says I:

"'Walter, ye dinna ask efter yer faither?'

"'No, I don't,' says he, verra short. 'Nell, gie me the draught.'

"So wi' that the lassie gied her een a bit quick dab, an' cam' forrit, an' pitten' her airm ablow his heid she gied him a drink. Whatever it was, it quaitened him, an' he lay back tired like.

"'Weel,' said I, after a wee, 'Walter, gin ye'll no' speer for yer faither, maybe ye'll speer for yer ain mither?'

"Walter An'erson turned his heid to the wa'.

"'Oh, my mither! my ain mither!' he said."

* * * * *

"I saw young Walter juist yince mair in life. I gaed to see him the neest mornin' when the end was verra near. He was catchin' an' twitchin' at the coverlet, liftin' up his hand an' lookin' at it as though it was somebody else's. It was a black Lunnon fog outside, an' even in the garret it took him in his throat, till he couldna get breath.

"He motioned for me to get doon beside him. There was nae chair, so I e'en gat doon on my

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knees. The lass stood white and quaite at the far side o' the bed. He turned his een on me, blue an' bonnie as a bairn's, but wi' a licht in them that telled he had eaten o' the tree o' knowledge.

"'Oh, Sandy,' he whispered, 'what a mess I've made o't, haven't I? You'll see my mither when ye gang back to Deeside. Tell her it's no' been so bad as it has whiles lookit. Tell her I've a' loved her, even at the warst—an', an', my faither, too!' he said, with a kind o' sab.

"'Walter,' says I, 'I'll pit up a prayer, as I'm on my knees onywey.'

"I'm no' giftit like some; but, Robert, I prayed for that laddie gaun afore his Maker as I never prayed afore or since; an' I feenished verra short juist as ordinar', '*an' forgie us a' oor sins, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*'

"'*Amen,*' said Walter An'erson.

CHAPTER III.

THE UNKNOWN MOURNER.

"THAT nicht as the clock was chappin' twal' the lassie came to my door (an' the landlady wasna that weel pleased at bein' wakkined, eyther), an' she askit me to come an' see Walter, for there was naebody else that kenned him in his guid days. So I took my stave an' my plaid an' gaed my ways wi' her intil the nicht—a' lichtit up wi' lang dooble rows

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o' gas lamps, an' awa' doon by the water side whaur the water sweels black anaith the brigs. Man, a big lichtit toun at nicht's far mair lanesome than the Dullarg muir when it's dark as pit-mirk. When we got to the puir bit hoosie we fand that the doctor was there afore us—I had gotten him to Walter the nicht afore—but the lassie was nae suner within the door than she gied an unco-like cry, an' flang hersel' distrackit on the bed. An' there I saw atween her white airms and her tangled yellow hair, the face o' Walter An'erson, the son o' the manse o' Deeside, lyin' on the pillow wi' the chin tied up in a napkin!

"Never a sermon like that, Robert Adair!" said Saunders M'Quhirr, solemnly.

They were now turning off the wind-swept muir-road into the sheltered little avenue which led up to the kirk above the white and ice-bound Dee Water. The aged gravedigger, bent nearly double, met them where the roads parted. A little farther up the newly elected minister of the parish kirk stood at the manse door in which Walter Anderson had turned the key forty years ago for conscience sake.

Very black and sombre looked the great, silent company of mourners that now drew together about the open grave—a fearsome gash on the white spread of the new-fallen snow. There was no religious service at the minister's grave save that of the deepest silence. Ranked round the coffin which lay on black bars over the grave mouth stood the elders, but no one of them ventured to take the positions of honor at the head and the foot. The minister

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had left not one of his blood with a right to these positions. He was the last Anderson of Deeside.

"Preserve us! wha's yon they're pittin' at the fit o' the grave? Wha can it be ava?" was whispered here and there back in the crowd. "It's Jean Grierson's boy, I declare, him that the minister took oot o' the puirhoose, and schuled and colleged baith. Weel, that cows a'! Saw ye ever the like o' that?"

It was to Rob Adair that this good and worthy thought had come. In him more than in any of his fellow-elders the dead man's spirit lived. He had sat under him all his life, and was sappy with his teaching. Some would have murmured had they had time to complain, bnt no one dare say nay to Rob Adair as he pushed the modest, clear-faced youth into the vacant place. He was not so unlike the other Walter Anderson about whose end Rob had just been hearing.

Still the space at the head of the grave was vacant, and for a long moment the ceremony halted as if waiting for a manifestation not of this world. With a swift, sudden startle the coil of black cord reserved for the chief mourner slipped off the coffin lid and fell heavily into the grave.

"He's there afore his faither," said Saunders M'Quhirr.

So sudden and unexpected was the movement, that, though the simplest thing in the world, a visible quiver passed through the bowed ranks of the bearers. "It's his ain boy Wattie come to lay his faither's heid i' the grave!" cried Daft Jess, the parish "natural," in a loud, sudden voice from the

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"*thruch*" stone near the kirkyard wall where she stood at gaze.

And there were many there who did not think it impossible.

As the monrners "scaled" away from the kirkyaird in twos and threes there was wonderment as to whom the property, for which the great laird and minister had cared so little, would go. There were very various opinions, but one thing was quite universally admitted, that there would be no such easy terms in the matter of rent and arrears as there had been in the time of "him that's awa'." So the snow swept down with a biting swirl as the groups scattered and vanished from each other's sight, diving into the eddying drifts as into a great tent of many flapping folds. Grave and quiet is the Scottish funeral, yet with a kind of simple manfulness as of men in the presence of the King of Terrors, yet possessing that within them which enabled every man of them to abide without unworthy fear the messenger who comes but once to all. On the whole, not so sad as many things that are called merry.

So the last Anderson of Deeside, and the best of all their ancient line, was gathered to his fathers in an equal sleep that snowy January morning. There were two inches of snow in the grave when they laid the coffin in. As Saunders said: "Afore auld Elec could get him happit, his Maister had hidden him like Moses in a windin'-sheet o' His ain." In the morning when Elec went hirpling into the kirkyaird he found at the gravehead a bare place that the snow had not covered. Then some remembered

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that, hurrying by in the rapidly darkening gloaming of the night of the funeral, they had seen some one standing immovable by the minister's grave in the thickly drifting snow. They had wondered why he should stand there on such a bitter night.

There were those who said that it was just the lad Archibald Grierson gone to stand a while by his benefactor's grave, but Daft Jess was of another opinion.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRAGEDY IN BYWATER COURT.

Bywater Court lies down Chelsea way. Not being in the East End, it is not bewritten, beslummed, district visited; also few murders of any note have been professionally carried through there. It is only a pure wedge of heathenism, driven into a district which is now regaining some of its old suburban tone, and priding itself upon the fact. Its ideal Palace of Delights is not such as Mr. Besant would approve. Many of the houses are undescribed in the directory, unvisited and largely unvisitable by the city missionary, alien from the latest plan of salvation by Social Science. The Charity Organization passes it by; there are supposed to be no deserving poor in Bywater Court. Mysterious shopfronts with nothing marketable in the windows scowl blotchily at the passer by; dried herbs swing uninvitingly, speckled with fly-blow and bleached

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with sun and dust. Frowsy women, mostly young, slink into the doors, or peer out of dark interiors through the space from which a single shutter has been removed, like the gap left by a missing tooth, sinister and prominent.

Only two visitors erect in self-respect the district knows, the slim curate, with his soft hat turned up aft and fore, and the policeman who shoulders his way in at these half-open doors without ceremony or "By your leave." All other frequenters of Bywater Court, dwellers or visitors, seem to glide, slither, or slouch sideways, stooping forward, in all sorts of slinking attitudes—shoulders drawn up, so that the head seems to be driven into the body as the cork of a bottle is driven by the too vigorous mallet, or else sloping away from the neck in a rounded curve like the contour of a gingerbeer bottle.

A row is of so common occurrence in Bywater Court that hardly a head is turned at the shrill intrusion of women's shrieks or the dull sound of blows. At such times some kind-hearted person usually stands at the mouth of the court to give the modulated whistle which warns of the coming of the "cops," for Bywater Court loves to conduct its own business, without interference from Her Majesty's officers. There is one door between the fried-fish shop of Judah Krause and the shady window with the gap-toothed shutter, in the doorway of which swung the dusty wisps of hay, a door which, by reason of its comparative cleanliness, has a look almost arrogant among its neighbors. The owner of the pass-key to that door is a young

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woman, about whose comings and goings the easy virtue of Bywater Court concerns itself not at all. In the dialect of the neighborhood, "she keeps herself to herself." It is known that her "man" died since she came, and she had buried him with the grandest funeral that was ever seen in Bywater Court. The memory of this even yet shares the place of honor in the gin-soaked recollections of the gossips of the Court with the burning of the Carter's Lane Mission Hall, which Bully Dan and his mates had set on fire because the athletic curate had expelled them neck and crop from the Sunday School for insubordination.

"Three months with hard! They got off easy!" said Bywater Court. "She's got a kid she'd 'a been better without!" was the Court's comment on the other case.

But to-night there was a bitter quarrel raging above the herbalist's shop. Sodden women pause for a moment, lift bleached and haggard faces towards the window, and stagger on, muttering of the knowledge born of bitter experience, "He's a-givin' it 'er!" The sullen frequenters of the herbalist's evil *rendezvous* are silenced by the sound of a quarrel deadlier than their own snarling misunderstandings. Through the jangle of tongues there comes fitfully the feeble wailing of a child.

"Saints in hivvun!" said Bridget Leary, "they're foightin' for the kid!"

Bridget Leary was right. In the low-roofed, cheaply wall-papered room overhead, with the screened bedstead in the corner, a poor place made pathetic with touches of a woman's taste, a man

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and a girl were standing on opposite sides of the deal table. The man stood erect, arms folded as only actors do on the stage. The woman, with her knuckles on the table, looked at her opponent under her heavy brows with sullen eyes of hate. A woman seldom looks long at a man whom she hates. When she does, if he is a wise man, he will go away from there.

"To think that I once cared for you, Herbert Peyton—that's bitterer to me than death—ay, than his death. Now I hate you—hate you, do you hear!" The man addressed affected to turn away as though wearied by a play he had seen played out many times.

"I've heard all that before, Nell; heard it a hundred times," he said. "You'll have your say out, and then you'll hear reason. I'm doing it for your good, you know. It's no use making a fuss. It's got to be done. So give me the child at once—it'll be well out of your way—well looked after, I mean. It's all arranged, and then you leave this and come home with me."

The woman addressed as "Nell" stood leaning forward, meeting his easy sneer with level brows under which her dark, dilated pupils shone with a slumberous fire. She opened her mouth to speak, but was silent as though no words would come from her white, dry lips venomous enough to give her hate expression.

The man watched her, his once handsome face puffed unwholesomely under the eyes, and his complexion mottled like the best india-rubber. The experienced eye set him down for what he was—

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the vulgar impressario of a popular variety entertainment. He thought that he knew what women were—it was his boast as he clinked glasses at many a fashionable bar with knowing young aristocrats who came into his world, in order to add its vices to their own in the Devil's amalgam which they called "Life." But now he was far from easy in his mind—so, like the brute he was, he tried the game of "bluff." He had far better have gone away.

"Now, listen," he said. "If you don't give me the brat quietly, Nell, I tell you I'll take him and put him away where you'll never see him any more. And, what's more, I'll have you arrested for bigamy, and then what'll become of the kid, I'd like to know. I can do it, and I will!" And he lifted his gloves from the table and made as if he would go.

The woman spoke. Her voice, naturally low and sweet, had harsh falsetto notes in it now.

"I'd kill both him and me first—ay, and you too," she said. "You deceived me once, Herbert Peyton—lied to me at Paris, lied to me at Boulogne, lied to me in London, and left me without a farthing. You had word sent to me from America that you were dead—would to God it had been true—and I married a man that loved me—married him good and honest—"

"Bah," said the man. "How could you marry? And if you did, you married a drunken loafer that never drew a sober breath—"

"Hold your lying tongue, Herbert Peyton. Don't anger me, or I may kill you!"

The man came round the corner of the table as if

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to get at her, but turning suddenly, he seized the child as it lay asleep on the counterpane, having dropped over innocently in the midst of the strife of tongues. As he lifted the child roughly, it awoke with a shrill and bitter cry—a cry of appeal to the mother heart that could not go unanswered. The feeding-bottle which had been lying on the side of the coverlet whipped over the bedside and fell on the floor. With an oath the man kicked at it and sent it crashing against the wall. For a short moment the young mother stood motionless, one hand pressed hard against her waist, then with sudden return of power she sprang to the table, something flashed in her hand, and before the man could turn, cumbered with the child as he was, he stumbled forward, and a pain like that of burning with red-hot iron ran through his side, and the waves of a great ocean thundered in his ears. He sank down on the bed from which he had just lifted the child. The mother took the child, which crowed with joy at the steady flare of the gas. There was a bright stain on the whiteness of its dress.

The man opened his heavy eyes, from which the fear had gone out. "You've done for me, this time, Nelly ; but, I say, you looked handsomer than ever !"

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CHAPTER V.

THE FLIGHT BY NIGHT.

As a great, high-panelled door swung open upon a narrow side street, a strange, clean scent mingled of chloride of lime and carbolic acid rushed out upon the night air. A wayfarer, hastening home belated from his office, turned to see whence it came. He had seen that door a hundred times, but he had never known that it led into the great Central Hospital, whose front occupied a hundred yards of the thoroughfare from which this lane branched off. He saw one of the Sisters of the hospital, carrying a swathed bundle, come quickly into the open street. A cab stood in front of the entrance. He noted that she opened the door of a "growler," and said a word to the cape-swathed driver, who took no notice—then she beckoned to some other person still in the shadow of the great doorway. So much he saw as he stood a moment on his heel. Had he stood a moment longer he had been on the high road to fortune, for his office was in Scotland Yard, and Scotland Yard was interested in young women leaving town that night. But he saw a tall man whom he knew as the house surgeon of the Central Hospital, and he said to himself: "They are sending off a nurse to a private case!" From sheer force of habit he turned once more as he reached the corner, and noted that the cab turned towards Waterloo Bridge.

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"The Paris night mail!" he said to himself. "Some half-pay admiral sick across the Channel!" for he was a man accustomed to rapid inference. So filing the circumstance in his memory as another leaf in the shifting chronicle of the world, he dismissed the matter, and went on, jingling his latch-key along with two coppers in his pocket, and wondering if his little girl would be off to bed. He had been hoping all day that she would not.

But the growler speedily turned northward again, through the sullen spaces of Lincoln's Inn, and held steadily north towards the Euston Road. As the cab passed under the massive arches, a man standing in the shadow signalled to another further in, who instantly went up and politely opened the door. The porters were polite that night to solitary females at the Euston Station.

"Where for, ma'am?" asked the man. "Blackport Convalescent, with pass from Central Hospital," said the Sister, giving him a slip of blue paper from a side pocket in the ready way of the experienced traveler. "Quite right, ma'am, change at Preston. Shall I label your luggage?"

"I have no luggage," said the woman, alighting, "but you can label me if you like." The man glanced at the pretty lay sister, and he was human.

"No use doing that," he said. "*You* know your way about." So he put her into a carriage and marked it "Engaged." "Now you'll not be disturbed. No, thank you all the same," said the humanized amateur porter. "It is a pleasure to do anything. Do you live at the Central always?"

But the lay sister only smiled as the carriage

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moved out from the platform. So all the night the train clashed and snorted on its way, flashed past rows of lights into the darkness again, undulated like a swift swimming eel on the long down grades, panted and gasped on the heavy up grades like a great beast driven beyond its powers. And alone in her corner the lay sister of the Central Hospital sat, and held her charge to her breast, answering the infrequent demand for tickets with the same blue oblong which had been so sufficient with the man who first opened the cab. She was now white and still, and her lips moved as though she were speaking; but she only shifted her babe occasionally and fed it out of a new feeding-bottle. Then she faced the whirling dark again and looked out with the same hopeless, set look, dully counting the telegraph poles as their dark shadows glided by, and as the door opened at the stations she started as one that dreads a pursuer. She did not, however, change at Preston, but only took another blue paper out of her pocket-book. During the long run to Carlisle, she did change, however, and as a lay sister vanished from the northern mail.

The morning was fully broken when she got out on the desolate platform of Cairn Edward Station. The babe still slept on her arm the untroubled sleep of healthy babyhood.

She uncovered its face and looked a long look; she wished that it would open its eyes. The flush of the sunrise was on the infant, like the promise of the dayspring from on high. The young woman stooped and kissed the boy who lay on her breast, unconscious of the clouded eyes of despair that

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looked upon him. The station-master—a broad, abrupt, burly man—came to speak to her. She was now plainly dressed as a young widow of the middle classes, and his heart went out to her. She seemed to claim friendship and counsel.

"Were ye expectin' onybody to meet ye?" he asked.

"No," she replied; "but I would like some conveyance to take me to a place they call Drumquhat."

"D'ye ken Saunders M'Quhirr?" asked the station-master, with a delighted ring in his voice. "Come ben the hoose an' the mistress'll sune get ye a dish o' tea an' something to eat—an' for the bit bairn, too!" he said, noticing the child with a married man's understanding. "Come yer ways; oots, lassie, I hae three lasses o' my ain." Soon they were installed, and the mistress, a buxom, capable woman, of somewhat less frank manner than her husband, gave them not unkindly welcome.

"Ay, an' ye are gaun to Drumquhat. Ye'll hae come a lang road, nae doot, though ye got yer ticket at Carlisle. Dear, sirce, to think that Saunders is here this verra mornin' truckin' four truck o' nowt beas' for Fa'kirk Tryst. He wull be gled to see ye. I'll see gin he's at the cattle slip." And out the good man bustled to find Saunders. In a minute or two he brought him to the door, a tall, slightly stooped Galloway farmer, with a shrewd and kindly face. He stood looking with a very world of pity and wonder in his eyes at the

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stranger who stood up before him with a dumb look of appeal in her eyes.

"My puir lass," he said, "ye did richt to come to Drumquhat. The mistress will sune get ye some color intil yer cheeks. Ay, ay; we'll juist gang hame the noo. The suner the bairn gets under cover the better!" and he took a long look at the child.

As he helped her into the sturdy, battered market gig, he saw that the water was running steadily down her thin cheeks. He was too wise and experienced to say a single word, but he laid his hand gently on the young girl's arm, saying only after a pause, "Whosoever cometh unto me—"

"Oh, that's not for me. It can never be for me!" she broke in.

And Saunders M'Quhirr did not contradict her in words, but the touch of his hand on her arm did not waver. So they drove through the dewy lanes, till from the crown of the high Dullarg moorland they saw the tree tops of Drumquhat. Saunders went in for a quick word with his wife before the visitor had descended. As they came out Saunders was saying to his wife, "And the bairn's a rael An'erson o' Deeside!"

This is what the Mistress of Drumquhat said to her visitor:

"Ye've gotten a stormy nicht to travel sae far, but a bonny mornin' to come to Drumquhat, where we are a' gled to see you."

And she took the babe into her own strong and motherly arms, where he nestled close, instinctively feeling the security and strength of them. As she

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took a long, steady look at his face, something caught her eye.

"Save us, what's that?" she said.

But the visitor had already gone in at the back door with Saunders. They did not use the front door much at Drumquhat save when the minister came.

It was a long, irregular stain on the child's white dress that she saw.

CHAPTER VI.

A PEACEFUL SUMMER'S DAY AT DRUMQUHAT.

DRUMQUHAT was a moor-farm of moderate size, set on one of the highest eminences of the reclaimed ploughland. There were half a dozen fields known in the terms of the lease as "arable;" but they owed their distinction to Saunders M'Quhirr and his father, who had come to Drumquhat when the heather grew right to the front door. Drumquhat looked down on the fields—a white square fortalice of buildings, with a crown of splendid beech foliage springing clear of the roofs out of the interior of the parallelogram. It had a gray and massive aspect, set foursquare to the winds of heaven, its stables, byres, and barns loopholed as for musketry. The dwelling-house at the southern side looked down to the *flowe* of the Whinnyliggate Moss, through which a slow burn of

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peaty water worked itself towards the village of the same name half a mile away. The whins of its naming made a glimmer like fire all along the banks even in the brightness of morning. Beyond the fields, now green with the braird of the corn, and the tender moist verdure of the first grass, the black peat mosses hemmed in the low farm buildings and their clump of trees. They gloomed up aloft, with lowering eyebrows of purple shadows in the moss-hags ; the heather of last year showed not the least sign of life, save where, along the borders, the curled shepherd's crooks of the bracken were beginning to rise stiffly. To the north, over the village, the land rose into what, for the south of Scotland, might be called mountains, but on every other side the mossy *flowes* with their gashed and scarred edges looked down upon the farm and its forty acres of ploughland as though threatening some day to overwhelm it with a glutinous inundation of peat.

The farm-dwelling known as the "hoose," was of one story, and meandered round the corner of the square of "office houses" as one piece after another had been added to suit the increasing needs of the tenants. There was a multiplicity of doors also, to the front and to the back, the front ones giving upon the grassy, broad walk, which separated the white-washed houses from the irregular square of orchard-garden which ran down the slope towards the well. One of the doors to this side was plain, and of a dusky weather-beaten blue. The other was a door with panels, and had been once painted in fair imitation of oak ; but the south

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winds, rain-laden from the Solway, had beaten it too sore for any such pretence to stand, and its natural yellow pine stood plain and shameless in the searching light of the morning. This door was now wide open, and through it ran a sturdy boy of five or six, shouting to the morning sun for gladness, who, as soon as he got clear of the house, picked up a stone from the path and threw it with indifferent aim but terrible earnestness at a red heifer which had set a pink and viscid nose over the little stile which led through the sheltering "plantin'" into the field beyond. Then the boy stood still, listening for something, again turned away, and, as if his gladness needed some sufficient expression, he turned a double somersault with his hands on the ground, heedless of consequences, gray kilts whirling in the air, and yelled for no sufficient cause whatever. Then, catching sight of some one's white cap coming up the long loaning from the spring, he ran as hard as he could down the road to help the mistress of the house to bring up a couple of cans of water. As he reached his friend the little boy ran full tilt into her dress of blue druggit as she stood resting with arms akimbo, and a placid smile of tolerant greeting.

"Walter!" she said, "wi', boy, is that ony wey to behave?" And the smile on her face showed that she thought that it was a very good way to behave.

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CHAPTER VII.

WEE WATTIE AN'ERSON.

As Mrs. M'Quhirr rested from the labor of carrying the pails of water up the road from the well, she looked with a certain buxom complaisance at the boy who hid a curly head hilariously under her white apron, and even stretched a roving hand towards the sacred recesses of the roomy housewife's "pooch," which dangled by her side. "Walter!" she said in a tone of severe intimidation, but the boy knew his ground far too well to be intimidated. As her own grown-up children often said, "that boy" could do things that not one of her own had dared to do even when they were "manmuckle."

"Where's your mither, Walter?" she said in a softer tone.

The boy was taking a walk round her as if her ample skirts were a circus tent. He stopped abruptly in his hide and seek. Another expression came across his face, and he said, succinctly:

"She's risin'!"

Mrs. M'Quhirr did not pursue the subject, but it was obvious that the feelings with which she regarded the boy were not extended in their fullness to the mother who at nine o'clock of this beautiful June morning was "risin'." The life of the farmtown began early. The mistress had been stirring

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and getting others astir soon after half-past three that morning.

"I'll see to your gettin' up," she used to say, "an' ye can please yoursels as to when ye gang to yer beds."

Shrewd, kindly, clever, managing, with a "clip in her speech" that the stranger might mistake for ill-temper—Mrs. Alexander M'Quhirr, "Mistress Mac-Whurr o' Drumquhat" to all the world, "Mary" to her own man, who was of opinion that she was a special creation, the guidwife of the comfortable farmer, Saunders M'Quhirr, was a "kenned woman" through all the parish. She kept the whole of the *personelle* of the establishment up to the mark, and her mark was a mark a little higher than that of anybody else. It was no mean character to a young woman to be able to say that she had stopped two years with Mrs. M'Quhirr. Yet, though the service at Drumquhat could not be called an easy one, it was performed with such a birr and cheerfulness that there was not a heartsomer place in all the countryside than the moor farm under the brow of the Dullarg peat-hags.

The two friends returned to the house, entering by the plain, unpanelled kitchen door, within the cool shade at the back of which the cans of cool, clear water were set down, a wooden cog hanging on a nail beside them for a dipper, so that when Walter or any of the "men-folk" came in tired and hot from work or play, there was refreshment of the purest at hand. Walter stayed now a moment or two to watch the dancing golden lights thread themselves in the bottom of the can as the limpid

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spring water settled itself to rest. This was, indeed, a thing that he often took a pilgrimage to see, for Walter Anderson was a naturalist even when he was the "weest of wee Watties." The freedom of all that citizenship of the air and the waters was conferred upon the boy, who had been born in the "rickle o' bricks" by the side of the Cesspool of the Nations. And to the quiet mother, with her limited horizons, and the clouded haze of memory which so happily blurred the past, this boy with his clear appreciation of the mysteries of the world was quite incomprehensible. Gifted with a personal attractiveness which had the dangerous property of not being in the least able to help its power, the beautiful "widow o' a far-oot freen'," as Saunders M'Quhirr explained his sudden visitor to the countryside, had long done havoc among the hearts of the choicest swains of the six parishes. But as yet nothing had come of it, and after nearly five years she was still at Drumquhat, just as much a fixture, and no more, than she had been that morning when Saunders went over to Cairn Edward Station to "truck the nowt beas'," and had brought back another and a heavier charge.

But her boy had done a work for her that she, with her town-bred ignorance and pretty, helpless indolence, could never have done for herself. He had wrapped himself round the very heart's core of Mary M'Quhirr, and taken the place of that first-born son who had been taken from her just at this most enticing age of flying curl and chattering tongue, a place that all her stalwart sons had never been able to fill. As long as the cares of their

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upbringing had lain heavy upon her, she had not thought of her lost boy, or thought only whiles in the silent watches; but it was different now when there were no young voices teasing her with their heart-comforting din. So Walter had been a gift to her, and had he been taken away from her, I verily believe she, though a God-fearing woman, would have reproached God, and hidden her face, mourning, and refusing to be comforted. Strangely, too, her love for the boy made her more kindly to her husband, with whose slow, thoughtful, book-reading ways she was not always in sympathy; and when she gave him the benefit of a piece of her mind for his good, it was a better mind than it used to be, judging by the sample.

So with small farewell, as she whom he called "gran" moved busily about her kitchen, chattering and bounding, Walter betook himself to his own peculiar haunts with his dog Yarrow. There was stuff in this lad of five wherewith to occupy himself to his own satisfaction during all the day. As he went out of the farm-yard between the peat-stack and the long fodder sheds, as yet empty of the high-piled hay, a voice held him for a moment.

"Where are ye gaun, Wattie? To the steppin' stanes; then tak' care an' no' fa' in!" it said, but the small boy was off as hard as his twinkling legs could carry him. As soon as he was out of sight he turned down a burnside, his feet splashing through the shallow water, and diving into a leafy covert he sat down by a large flat stone. Taking off his brass-latched clogs, and his "rig-and-fur" stockings, both the providing of his beloved foster-

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mother, he put them carefully under the stone, in a commodious receptacle formed by the convenient "pot-hole" in which long ago a glacier torrent had ground the soil on which the farmer of Drumquhat grew his oats. There they companied with a unique collection of sheep's teeth, an article of *vertu* in which Walter was a connoisseur, feathers of all descriptions, plain brown of hen, glossy blue of duck, strong grey goose wing; here also in match-boxes were some eggs with blow-holes into which the naturalist could put his finger, curious knots from the smooth sides of beech trees, which it was one of the delights of Wattie's life to hunt for and knock off with the long stick his "Uncle Alick" had cut for him; chiefest treasure of all, there was a strange twisted knife in smooth ivory sheath, yellow like the ring which he had cut his teeth upon. The knife part was held fast in some mysterious way, and though Wattie had tried for hours to open it, he had never yet succeeded. He had found it after the long drought of the spring in a peat-hag up on the moor, and aware, by some boy's instinct, that if he showed it, it would be taken from him, he kept this secret in his heart, and went into the cool seclusion of the burnside, where the rocks came out from under their covering of turf, to worship this wonderful thing which had fallen down from heaven for him alone. But to-day he hardly handled it, for as soon as he could conceal the traces of his presence and merge from the little birch-hung glen, he was off at the top of his speed over the smooth meadows. He trod on air. He felt the fresh, soft grass smite his feet with

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a dewy kiss, and the wind brush his temples like the tassels of invisible trees. He was glad to live. It was such a joyous thing to be so near the grass and smell the earth. Yarrrow, noble but lazy dog, pretended to gallop and roll with as mad a glee over the meadow grass as his master, but really he thought it was too hot for such frivolities. Besides, he always went on his own bare feet, and therefore did not know the wild excitement of the first mad, barefooted rush over the springing grass. When he got down to where the river or brook dimpled over the stones, he settled himself for a glorious day. There were great dragon flies about, concerning which he told himself wonderful tales, and affected a delicious fear whenever one of the blue, gauzy arrows came too near him. The "Stepping Stones" were a row of granite steps, rude and waterworn, on which many generations of feet had trodden, but which were set too far apart for Walter's twinkling bare feet and kilted legs. In any village Walter would have attained through ridicule to the dignity of trousers, but living without boyish companion, he had been kept long in the breezy freedom of the simpler garment. Yarrow went across like a rocket, and was soon lost to sight ranging among the low brushwood on the opposite bank. Walter would have followed him at once, but the water was too deep for him at the farther side, and he was obliged to turn back. He looked about to see how he might get across. He saw his "uncles," the sons of the farm, along with Joe the farm boy, working at the "turnip-howing" on the rise of the green hill above him, and he made a

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straight course towards them. Arrived he proceeded, by his own methods of steady persistence, the original methods of the Importunate Widow, to tease Aleck, the best natured of the company—and one not loath to leave work—to accompany him across to the other side, and give him the needed "carry" over the deep place at the ford. This, after numerous denials, Aleck did, playing upon the boy's fears, with the teasing jocosity of nineteen, and the consciousness of unlimited strength and lusty feeding. He took him in his arms, and when in mid-stream pretended to dip the boy in, or throw him into "Black Duncan," the gloomy pool where it is recorded that the drunken terror of the country-side had gone to his account many years ago, and where his spectre still walked—a head and a pair of Wellington boots, lacking the connecting body—a most gruesome hiatus

Then, at the farther side, Walter was dismissed with an advice never to come bothering again, and left to pursue his way. This he did to the cottage upon the hillside, a retreat of such perfection of situation that, but for the midges in summer, it was the ideal of an earthly paradise. Bowered in creepers and roses, at the end of a dainty wooded loaning, overhanging the burn, it was an ideal spot for a retreat. It was held at this its best time by Miss Katie Fraser, an aged maiden lady who had come to live there in her declining years, and with whom there dwelt intermittently, two nephews and a niece. When the tired small boy, moving cautiously up the narrow path from the stepping stones, for the better avoidance of thorns, reached

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the front of the cottage, Miss Fraser, who had seen him coming, and was fond of the lad, came out, with her ample black lace cap and stiff side curls, to give him welcome.

"Come awa' into the garden, Wattie, an' thou shalt hae a bonny posy," were her words of greeting.

"I wad raither hae a *piece!*" returned that practical-minded youth, whose barefooted athletics were giving him an appetite.

The kindly old lady laughed a hearty laugh, and turning all her good-natured bulk, like a three-decker of Nelson's time standing by to go about, she led the way into her little parlor, where the roses looked in at the window, and from which the moors of Drumquhat seemed in another world altogether. There the two set about turning out what good things there were in the corner cupboard of shiny brown mahogany, and finally sat down to feast like children on bread and honey—bread which had been brought two days before by the local carrier, and honey, rich and grained, "rowned," as Miss Katie said, by standing since the back-end of the year before.

So the two sat and gossiped, and Walter told of the shameless defection of Yarrow, and of the dire vengeance that was about to descend on his head when his master caught him, till at last Miss Kate got an opening for her question:

"And hoo is yer mither, Walter?" she said, with an off glance at him.

"She was risin'!" once more unwillingly repeated the lad.

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And Miss Katie's look would have soured cream, as she said herself, for she had no opinion of those who lay long abed. Now, though she herself was in the tranquil enjoyment of a very modest competency, she rose at six and got the dew o' the morning, keeping in consequence a cheek not uncomely till far beyond the threescore and ten.

Then she took the boy on her knee, for, being a spinster of grace, she had a great love of children, and she felt that if it had been her lot, "as I'm thankfu' it wasna," to be married, Walter was the kind of son she would have liked. Then Miss Katie sighed a long sigh, and Walter kicked his bare feet together and wondered ungratefully when she was going to put him down ; and if, when she did, she would give him any more of the bread and honey. He took short views of life—affection was very well, but the honey was better.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN EVENING MEETING ON THE MOOR.

Nelly Anderson, the young widow of Saunders M'Quhirr's "far-oot freen'," stood with her back to the sunset, her hands held behind her waist, and every line of her splendid figure cut sharp against the splendor of the west. There were few more beautiful sights in Scotland that June evening. Archibald Grierson, fresh from his college training,

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knew that there was none. He had been sitting on the shaggy island of heather and gray bent which formed the crown of the long, level ascent of the moor. The deep hags made by the peat cuttings of former years islanded him about. It had been his favorite haunt as a student, long before any such splendid vision as this came towards him like the embodied goddess of the twilight walking beside the gloomy borders of the Dullarg Flowe. Many a day had he lain prone on the heather and listened to the moor-birds, the Jack-snipe whirling high in the lift and crossing the brightness of the sky with its stooping swirls, uttering at the same time that wailing whimper which is like the cry of a lost soul. But the moorland solitudes spoke to him now as they had never done before, for first love brings out the meanings of nature. Each sound and color speak with meanings so fresh and strange that new eyes seem to be given to the lover, and he wonders in the contempt of newly acquired insight, what blindness can have held him so long.

Archibald Grierson, late student of Edinburgh College, looked at the woman who had walked carelessly along the winding track from the farm. He had seen her come from afar off with the lover's second sight, for in the interval of his reading he had noted every movement of human creature and beastial about the farm of Drumquhat that day. The peace of the life of a farm, when it is looked down upon from above, seems the quietest and most desirable on the face of the earth. So when a flutter of white appeared among the beech trees and a figure moved out of the beech crowned quadrangle

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into the open, the heart of the watcher on the Flowe went like a trip hammer, and a keen and stinging sensation akin to pain thrilled through his veins. The figure, which not even the eye of Saunders M'Quhirr could have made out at that distance, was plainly apparent to the eye that had watched all the day, and many days, for just that gleam of white, and that easy, unconscious sway of limbs in perfect movement. Nell Anderson was infinitely handsomer as a woman of twenty-four than ever she had been as a girl. The old hunted, post-to-pillar life was, to her mind, past and done with, buried out of sight and largely out of remembrance. Something seemed to have cut it off quickly—an illness or something—she was not sure what, and she did not wish to know; and the haven of peace which the farm among the Galloway moors had been to her had brought out all the beauties of perfect physical womanhood, while the reposefulness of her soul spoke from her eyes. Archie Grierson had made many comparisons for those eyes; but he had never confided any of them to her. There was a certain dignity, or perhaps a lack of comprehension, about Nell Anderson's manner when any rural swain made her a clumsy compliment which prevented its repetition. Archie Grierson was far too reverent of his ideal to risk such a rebuff. Enough that he was permitted to talk to her and look at her. Well was he aware that his observance was no more than the gaze of the red-and-white Ayrshire cows among which she loved to wander. He would have given twenty years of his young life had he been able to tell himself that even possibly the feet of

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his goddess had been turned towards the moss on his account. But he knew better.

He rose to his feet, a tall, square-shouldered Scot of the blonde Norwegian type so common in Galloway, and with the easy strides of the hillman came towards her over the moor. Nell Anderson did not see him coming till he was within fifty yards. When she caught sight of him, he thought that there was a slight contraction of her smooth brows under her broad hat as she turned to greet him. He came forward gently, with worlds of expression in the blue eyes that had more of Ireland than Norway in their depths. The young widow, who was still a girl, smiled faintly, and held out her hand with a movement spontaneous and frank, but she did not speak. Indeed, she spoke but seldom, though she had that strange quality which is often possessed by women with a history, that her silence said unutterable things.

They stood together looking over the solemn moors and the peacefnl strath where the smoke of the evening supper fires was beginning to shoot up into the still air. The sun showed just a rim over the rounded top of Cairnsmore Hill, far up near the sources of the Black Water. There was so strong a likeness between these two that they might have been brother and sister, though she whom the parish knew as Nelly Anderson had been born and brought up in the heart ot London.

"Do you often come here, Mrs. Anderson?" asked Archibald Grierson, breaking the silence with the cunning of a diplomat, for as a matter of fact no

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one knew so well as himself that she had not been on the moor for at least nine months.

"Well, no, Archie," replied the girl, frankly, turning her eyes, gray with a violet shadow caught from the sunset within them, full upon him. "Generally I go to the water-side or through the fields with Walter." Archie Grierson started. He had forgotten that there were more than two people in the world, and with the natural jealousy of the extremely youthful lover, he did not care to think that there had been any past to this woman whom he loved, before he knew her.

"And where is Walter to-night?" he asked, glad to interest her by any means if she would only look at him while she talked.

"He's not back yet from the fields with the 'boys'," she said a little sadly. "Aleck said that he put him over the water to see Miss Fraser before dinner time, and he has stayed with her."

It was a strange fashion in which she loved her boy, for she showed no jealousy when his active habits kept him long away from her, or when he seemed to prefer his "gran" or the "boys."

"You've got the finest sunset to-night that has been seen this year from the moor," said Archie. "You know, I do a great part of my work up here," he added, as though his presence needed an apology. "I saw Saunders as he went through the sheep."

"What is the book you are studying?" she asked, taking it from his hand. The young man blushed to his eyes. It was no work of a hard-worked student, but a volume of Tennyson. His companion

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glanced at it carelessly, yet with a gaze of wistful desire.

"Read it to me," she said.

The young man took the book with a tumult of rejoicing in his heart. He had never thought of anything so hopeful and delightful as to read the words of the poet of love to the woman he adored, all alone with her on the wide face of the moorland under the glory of the dying day. His heart beat faster as he opened the book, fluttered the leaves with a rapid hand, and hesitated between the passionate odes and the love-laden lyrics which it contained, for the book he held in his hand was the old green-covered copy of Maud, which has long been the lover's Bædeker to the country of his desires. Nelly Anderson leaned against the dyke, and made a splendid picture of unconscious grace by clasping her white hands behind her head. Her eyes were full of twilight mysteries and a certain yearning wistfulness which desired to understand itself, yet was not able. Archibald Grierson thought how, if she would but let him, he could teach her a new life, and a higher satisfaction for her spirit than any she dreamt of; but as yet he was conscious that he was speaking to her as sailors cry to each other in a narrow channel when the mists have hidden the rocks. Archie read poetry well, with a fresh unconventionality, a rushing, lover-like *élan* which might have carried away a girl's heart not filled full of vague memories and uncertainties. Yet this girl with the woman's heart and the woman's hard experience behind her placid beauty, listened as

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though the burning words of the poet were but the wind over the moor.

And so Archibald Grierson read on and on, and the gold overhead darkened into crimson, and looked not up till, with a flush on his cheek and a breaking thrill in his voice, he finished the long-drawn lyrical cry of the lover, and reached the heart-broken despair of the conclusion.

> "Do I hear her sing as of old,
> My bird with the shining head,
> My own dove with the tender eye?
> But there rings on a sudden a passionate cry,
> There is some one dying or dead."

Nelly Anderson stood suddenly erect. The dazed expression went out of her eyes. There came a sudden tide of horror and understanding in them.

"No, no, no!" she said, with swift impetuosity and vehement expression. "You must not read that—I cannot bear it."

The reader stopped, taken by the throat at this strange thing. He had no word to say, but looked uncomprehendingly at her, as the light faded slowly from her eye and the blood ebbed from her cheek. She was silent for long, and looked towards the place where the sun had gone down, and from which there streamed back purple lines of sunset clouds, making a glorious wake for the sunken Lightship of the World.

"You will forgive me," he said, simply; "I should not have read so long. Forgive me before I go; I must get home before dark."

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"Ah! it is all dark for me!" said Nelly Anderson. As Archibald Grierson passed the farm buildings of Drumquhat with his long, swinging strides, he was hailed by one of the "boys." He turned and saw that there was an unusual stir about the place. Men and women came and went, and some were moving down to the water-side with lanterns. They seemed to be searching for something.

"What's the matter?" he called out.

"Wee Wattie has been lost on the hills ever since ten this mornin'. Come and help us to look for him!"

CHAPTER IX.

A NIGHT ON THE MOORS.

It is now darkening toward the night, and a small and dilapidated boy thinks that it is time to be turning homeward. For one thing, he wishes that he had the shoes which he took off so gaily in the morning. He sees quite clearly the stone under which they lie so quiet, and he longs still more for the curious knife with the queer criss-crosses on the sheath. It is true that it would not come out, but he would feel safer if he were fully armed. The sun has travelled a long way since he left the hill-side cottage where Miss Katie dowered him with a farewell "piece" in addition to the orgie which they had held in the parlor. Walter wishes heartily now

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that he could see the blue smoke shooting upward which would tell him that he was in the neighborhood of that cottage among the roses. But he has wandered on all day, light-hearted as the birds, following the bent of his twinkling feet, sore and scratched now with the heather stubs. By dint of sawing for an indefinite time with a pocket knife perfectly innocent of edge, and whose blunt condition was one of Walter's most painful trials, he has managed to cut the straight, green shoot of a hazel and trim it into a weapon of defence, but even thus, in spite of his best precautions, he felt the inadequacy of his means of defence against the numerous tigers, leopards, and other wild beasts which infested the Galloway moors.

But though Walter Anderson looked around, he saw nothing but the hilltops circling the horizon, too like one another to afford any guidance to a boy so near the level of the heather as he. Then he mounted to the top of a hillock of shaggy and matted heather and looked long for any glimpse of the treetops of Drumquhat. But he only saw the slow twilight of mild June creeping down over the brown moors; and in the moist hollows of the bogs shallow pools of mist gathering. It was a lonely place, but it was a stout little heart that beat in the breast of the lad, and he had no idea of giving in, though the darkness threatened to come upon him far from his "gran" and the white farm square of Drumquhat. His mother, too, would have to take her walk down to the waterside by herself, and at the thought a tear almost forced itself out from under the unwilling eyelid. He knew that the cows

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were come lowing home and there would be no one to stand at the gate and cry :

"Hurley, Hurley! Hie awa' hame!"

There is nothing so pathetic to a boy as the thought that he will be missed, and this remembrance was the most grievous of all. Walter had no idea of how far his feet had brought him that day, nor yet of the direction in which he ought to return. The moorbirds came circling and calling plaintively around, and the pewits, reassured by the small size of the intruder, came as he thought offensively near. Whereupon Walter filled his pockets with numerous and appropriate pebbles to drive them away, feeling that the depth of all possible humiliation would be to be interred by them. A sensible boy, even if he were going to die, did not want any "Babes in the Wood" and "Robin Redbreast" nonsense.

Before it was quite dark, the moon rose, and then Walter knew that his time was come in earnest, for every boy knows that lions and tigers always hunt by moonlight. There was a great silence on the face of the moorland. It was bleached now and melted away into vague immensities and gray mysteries which vanished as you approached. Walter listened, and there came on the light night wind the sound of some animal trampling over hard ground, then a silence as if some intervening hillock kept back the sound, and then again the noise of feet beating nearer and nearer.

Walter's little heart went to his throat, he tried

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to cry out, but his voice would not come. He started up to run, but discovering that he had started without his hazel wand, his only means of defence save the saw pocket knife, he returned without a moment's delay to the spot where he had left it. Having secured it, he applied himself with all his vigor to the task of running in the opposite direction from the threatening sounds.

His progress could hardly be called running, for at every few steps he would trip in some intricate heather twist, tough as wire, and, falling forward, instinctively bend his supple body into the half hoop of the hedgehog, and so roll down the declivity, coming upon his feet at the bottom, and continuing his flight with unabated energy, and without a single moment's pause to ascertain damages. Truly a providence watches over drunkards and children. This boy in a quarter of an hour took more risks of having his neck broken than a grown man would take in half a dozen years. All the while the moon shed down a grave and placid light on the kilted little lad with the white face as he fled from the unseen monster.

At last Walter Anderson paused, not because he wished to do so, but because he had fallen into a moss hag up to the neck, and as he sustained himself by a bush of blueberry plants and dug his toes into the soft, black peat, he heard the dread sounds dying away into the distance. In his flight he had crossed the unfenced road which leads across the great moors from the ancient, royal burgh of New Galloway by the Ken Water to the Newtown of the Stewarts on the borders of the shire. Down this

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road five minutes after he crossed it, Archibald Grierson came on one of the Drumquhat plough horses, making clumping Brown Bess gallop in a way that would have surprised Saunders M'Quhirr had he been there to see; so near was Archie Grierson to his best chance of his sweetheart's gratitude.

But as he passed he saw nothing of the dew-drenched, bonnetless head of a little boy looking pitifully out of a moss hag, who felt sure in his inmost soul that he had just escaped the clutches of the "Accuser of the Brethren."

So Walter Anderson thought it was time to say his prayers, and thus he prayed: "O Lord, forgive us our sins, and remember not our trans-somethings against us. Look down from heaven and help"—(so far his petitions had run in the accustomed groove carefully modelled upon the prayer of Saunders the elder, but now the official supplications broke down and the personal came in)—"and help a wee laddie in a moss-hole. Keep him frae teegars an' lions an' bogles an' black horses that come oot o' the lochs an' eat ye up, an' frae green monkeys that hing on trees, an' claw ye as ye gang by; an' gie me something to eat, for I'm near deid wi' hunger, an', my word, but I'll warm Yarra (that's my dowg) for rinnin' awa', when I catch him, an' bless my mither an' a' inquirin' freen's, for Jesus' sake, Amen!"

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CHAPTER X.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

THE June nights are merciful in Galloway, and it was not long before a broad bar of light lay across the eastern hills which shut out the plains of the Dee and the long glen of the Ken. The pale sea-green lingering in the west had not yet faded into ashy gray when the eastern sky began to flame. The clouds in the east through which the sun rose were long and parallel like ocean rollers combing towards a sandy shore, while the clouds of the sunset converged to a point as though the sun draws them flaming after him with the speed of his downward rush. Suddenly up sprang the sun over the low rounded summits to the south, and the shadows of every bush of bog myrtle and tuft of heather started westward, and the cool, blue image of a lonely upright boulder, like a Breton *menhir*, lay for half a mile across the heather. On the sunny side of this landmark the red rays fell on a bare and curly head, on which the dew sparkles just as it does on the yellowish gray bent upon which it is pillowed. Apparently the flaxen fleece which covers it is a sufficient protection, for the boy has taken his bonnet off and covered his feet with it. He lies curled up like a collie sleeping in the sun. He continues to sleep quietly and soundly with the undisturbed repose of childhood till the

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dew dies from off the heath and from the angles of sunny hair.

At last he awakens, uncoils himself like a lithe young animal, starts to find himself under the greater canopy of heaven ; and with a shake of his kilt and a toss of his head, he rises, having completed his toilet for the day. He has no fear now that there is the broad light of day on the moors. He thinks that it would not be such a bad thing to be lost on the hills if only plates of porridge were distributed at suitable distances. A pewit stoops toward him with a condescending dip and a flirt of the wings. He resents this, saying to himself, "Foolish bird, to think to take me in !" and moves along in his own way, like a ranging greyhound, along the bare tops of the peat islands. The pewit flutters a broken wing, drops almost at his feet, but he does not cast even a tolerant eye on her best performances. There, at last, upon a bare place where the bent has been flattened, he finds what he has been seeking—two brown eggs unevenly blotched with black. Walter seizes them without the slightest compunctions. This is his breakfast, and they are soon professionally tapped and emptied with the knowing crook of the elbow which shows the "heather-bred." The pewit meanwhile screams herself hoarse.

"Shoo ! Go and lay other two !" says the boy, unfeelingly. "Any hen could do more than that."

He remembers with regret the time when he was allowed a penny for each dozen of "laid away" eggs that he found, a practice in which his "gran" encouraged him till she found that as the average

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of "found" nests—that is, of nests made by hens in the fields for secret brooding purposes—increased, the number of eggs in the legitimate nests diminished. Walter was rapidly waxing rich, but the whole hideous plot was laid bare one day when his "gran" came suddenly upon him sliding cautiously towards the planting.

"What's that ye've got aneath yer peenie, Wattie?" she demanded.

The peenie was lifted, and there, alas! were discovered two newly laid eggs which the small financier was conveying to the better investments of an outlaw nest which in due time would be "found," and a penny claim made upon it. His "gran," who had hitherto held Walter immaculate, once more became sound on the doctrine of Original Sin. Saunders proposed that the boy be delivered to his mother with a request for an application of Solomon's cure.

"'Warm backs, guid bairns,' my ain mither used to say," he remarked, sententiously.

"An' a bonny job she made o' ye!" replied his spouse, dispassionately, for she claimed a monopoly of the moral sentiments in the household. "Na, na; I'll manage the boy mysel'."

So for several days Walter walked disconsolate in the cold shades of his dear "gran's" averted countenance.

Breakfast being over so quickly, the lost boy tramped away over the moor, sure that he must come out somewhere. He was as merry as the larks that were singing above him. He hallooed at

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the plovers. Once he saw a sheep and pretended it was an elephant

"Where the spicy breezes
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle."

By-and-by he came to a wide burn, and hastened to cross it in an approved manner. It was fringed, like many South Upland burns, with sparse and ill-favored birches. He found one of these which leaned over the water, being undermined by the winter spates, and crawled out upon its swaying top till it became too slender to bear him. He had counted upon the bend of the bush depositing him near enough the opposite bank to drop easily on the ground. But before he was ready to cut loose, the treacherous birch gave way entirely and fell souse into the water, small human squirrel and all. Walter shook himself clear of the twigs that lashed his bare legs, and wondered how he was to get out of the water, for his little feet could find no bottom.

"Here, nice boy, take hold of my 'parolso' and I'll pull you on shore," said the clearest little voice in the world, and looking up in great surprise, Walter Anderson saw a little lady perhaps a year older than himself, clothed in some white stuff, fine like cobweb, she herself apparently all yellow curls and great blue eyes. He had now reached, thanks to the water-logged birch-bridge, a place where his feet touched the bottom, and it occurred to him that the opposite side must be Fairyland. He had often wanted to go there.

"Are you a fairy?" he asked.

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"Why, no!" laughed the curls, gaily, shaking her fleece bewilderingly. "I'm only a little girl, and you're the nicest boy I ever saw." Then very frankly, "I like nice boys. Come up here and I'll give you a kiss."

"What's a kiss?" asked Walter Anderson, whose ignorance was great, for kisses were not mentioned at Drumquhat. It was not thought menseful to do so.

"Come up here and I'll show you!" answered the maiden, promptly.

Clearly an invitation by no means to be refused.

The children went home together, the little maiden in her gauzy summer frock and her yellow hair whipping her face as the breeze came over the moors. She gave her hand to the "nicest boy she had ever seen," in dripping jacket and kilt, who carried her "parolsol" in his hand along with his blue bonnet like the courteous knight he was. He was a ragged cavalier, but shining from his bath in the burn and with his face full of light.

"And where do you come from, nice boy?" said the little girl.

"I cam' last frae Miss Fraser's cottage, but I bide wi' my 'gran' at Drumquhat," said Walter, plainly. "And I've a dowg—my word, but I'll gie him a lickin' he'll mind when I get him," the memory of Yarrow's iniquity coming over him, "an' I hae ten cats—an' their names are Tam, an' Jim, an' Bob, an' Ben, an' Specklie—but Specklie's an awfu' thief." This with an accent of pride.

"How is that?" asked the little girl, much interested.

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"Weel," said Walter, warming to one who took such an interest in his playfellows, "it's this way, ye see Specklie is no' a hoose cat. He bides i' the barn, or whiles i' the byre—Jean, the big black Gallowa' coo, lets him lie on her back in the cauld nights—Specklie's black, too, ye ken, but he has white in his nose and tail. And when ony o' the decent hoose cats come oot into the yaird wi' a moose or onything to eat, Specklie is doon frae the riggin' like a shot, an' there's a graun' fecht, lyin' on their backs an' fechtin', an' spittin', an' rowin' ower like a ba'—"

"Horrid creatures!" said the little girl. "My cat Flossie never does that!" This with her little nose high in the air.

"Maybe there's nae Specklie in your yaird!" said Walter, compassionately. "But it's no' a lang fecht, though graun' while it lasts—for a' in a meenit the hoose cat'll be rinnin' a' it can for the hoose wi' a tail like a heather besom, an' Specklie sittin' on the riggin' o' the barn eatin' the hoose cat's breakfast!"

"What a *very* wicked beast! Tell me more. Why do you not send him away?" the little maid asked all in a breath. She had a way of speaking that Walter had never heard before, something soft like the cushie's calling in the wood, and yet an accent ringing through it like clear water plashing on rocks. Walter could not analyze, but he highly approved.

"Go on—tell me more about Specklie!" she commanded, briskly. Specklie's wickedness was fascin-

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ating above the tame excellence of many "hoose cats."

"Weel, Specklie is an oot-bye cat, ye see, an' he thinks that 'hoose cats' should bide in the hoose," said Walter, who also believed in a place for everything and everything in its place. "Specklie comes oot first to meet me when I còme back frae the schule!"

"Do *you* go to the school?" asked the girl, with a very evident increase of respect. She had not thought of a boy in kilts going to school.

"Ay, that do I," said Walter, who had been once or twice without very notable effects in the way of education. He did not enter into statistics. "Specklie is a good cat; he was the first to come an' meet me when I cam' hame; but noo the hale ten come, an' that's the only time that Specklie'll no' touch a hoose cat. Na, he kens better."

"How does Specklie come to meet you?" asks his companion.

"I get to the tap o' the Craigs fornent the hoose, an' there I stan' an' cry, '*Tissy wissy, tissy wissy!*' till every cat aboot the place rins oot to meet me. They come frae the byre and they come frae the stables and oot o' the stackyaird, whaur they hae been catchin' rats; an' they a' come doon to the burn, lifting their feet high up, for pussies dinna like the weet, an' *myowin'* like mad wi' their tails curled up —ten tails ower their ten backs—till they come rinnin' up the bank to meet me, an' then they rub themsel's again my legs, and speel up ontil my shoother!"

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"How splendid! I shall come and live with you!" broke in his companion, enthusiastically.

"Ye'll hae to speak to 'gran' aboot that," said Walter, who had his own notions as to who was head of the house at Drumquhat. There was a silence for some moments as the children went along the birch-shaded way hand in hand—no thought of inequality having apparently come between them.

"What is your name, nice boy?" suddenly asked the curls, shaking themselves briskly.

"They ca' me Walter Anderson," said Walter, succinctly; "but ye can ca' me Wattie gin ye like."

"Well, Wattie, my name is Marion Durand," said the little girl, politely, feeling that it lay upon her also to give her credentials in return; "but my father always calls me May," she said. She gave no permission to the boy to call her by that name. Walter, however, promptly assumed it.

"It's a bonnie name," he said, "but Mary is mair common hereaboot!"

Then it was that the young lady showed her first touch of pride.

"But I am not common, little boy!" she said. Then, as though relenting, and as an explanation, "I am going to be a lady, and do all kinds of nice things to help people when I grow up. My nurse says that all these fields belong to me. What are *you* going to be when you grow up?" she asked, raising her long-lashed eyes with an instinctive pride to the frank ones of the boy. Walter Anderson was not awed. A landed interest was nothing to him to whom the birds spoke, and for whom the

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flowers held up their heads, nodding with loving messages.

"I'm going to be a herd!" said Walter Anderson.

Thus they spoke together with unabated confidence, this embryo Galloway herd in ragged kilts and the future lady of the manor, till they began to draw up the slope of a winding woodland path, through which the afternoon sun drove lances of mellow light. The plain front of a considerable mansion shone through the green haze of the beech leaves a few hundred yards ahead of them. Walter looked eagerly at it, for he had never seen so large a house. It had a couple of turrets with curious narrow windows, something like the slits in the Drumquhat barn, and a white square tower rose from the centre. Walter noticed that there was no glass in the highest windows, or in the narrow slits of the towers.

Over the door there was a sculptured coat of arms, and a stone with the words

"DO THY DAY'S DARG"

cut thereon in antique letters, which, of course, the lad could not read. On the other side of the heraldic beasts was a large Gothic A surmounted with a coronet.

"What hoose is that?" queried Walter, pausing in astonishment at such undreamed of adornments.

"That," said the little one, eagerly, pulling the lad forward with all her might, lest even at this late hour he might escape her, "that is the big House of Deeside."

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CHAPTER XI.

THE HOUSE OF DEESIDE.

"Miss Leezie, Miss Leezie, wha's that ye re bringin' here? Whatna gaberlunzie's raggit speldron hae ye fa'en on wi' noo? Save us, but the lassie's gane gyte! Is there no' eneuch rack an' ruin aboot the Hoose o' Deeside already, but ye maun bring every gypsy's brat an' prowlin' nicht-hawk to its auld wa's. Gang ben this moment to your lessons, an' as for you"—here the speaker turned fiercely to the lad who was standing still holding his companion by the hand—"gae aboot yer business, an' come nae mair here or I'se set the dowgs on ye!"

Walter Anderson was not alarmed, but his eyes dilated, for he had never been spoken to in this manner before. He dropped his little friend's hand, as unwilling to be a disgrace to her, a hand which that young lady instantly regained possession of.

Then he looked up steadily at the angry face of the dark-browed, gray-haired woman who stood threateningly with her hands on her hips at the corner of the house, and he said:

"I come frae Drumquhat, an' my name is Walter Anderson."

But the straightforward answer seemed only to enrage the woman more, for she came forward towards the pair, with her hand uplifted to strike,

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and her tongue running free like wildfire across the lift.

"Is't come to this that every bare-leggit gangrel that gangs the kintra maun come to the auld Hoose o' Deeside threepin' himsel' to be an An'erson. Gae oot o' my sicht, ye limb o' Satan, ye!"

Walter stepped nearer to his companion, who would not let his brown hand go amid all the storm, holding it very firm in hers.

"Good-bye!" he said, and as she held forward her lips, not shamefacedly, but frankly and simply, the boyish brown face and the clear rose and white met for the second time. 'Tis not a lesson long a-learning.

A strong hand interposed, and such a stroke as he had never yet received, stunned the boy. The blood sprang from his mouth and nostrils with the force of the blow, almost choking him as he turned to go down the woodland path with a vague desire to be lost once more on the moor and lie down forever in a moss hag.

Some one had called on the dogs, and as he rounded the pillars of the inner gate, stumbling like a child in a dream, bright lights and sudden darks chasing each other before his eyes, two great hounds, with the stiff bristles of the wolfdog of the Caucasus, sprang towards him. Walter took an unsteady step towards them. No animal had ever even threatened him. Here at least were friends. He laid a hand fearlessly on each as they came romping up. At once the dogs fell a-whimpering, and fawned on the bleeding boy as he lay down on the grass among their feet with his face looking

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skywards. The orchard gates stood open and on their posts there was also the scutcheon and the motto. An old man, small and spare, with keen, cold eyes, came through the apple trees, and looked down on the boy, who took off his cap and tried to rise, while the hounds whined and licked the blood from his face with moist and bleery sympathy.

Thus was it that Walter came to the ancient home steading of the Andersons of Deeside.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HERD'S NEW FRIEND.

THE old man who came so quietly through the orchard gate stood for a long moment looking at the boy as he lay on the ground with the dogs licking his face. There was a pale transparency about his features and the skin of his hands as of a plant that had grown in the dark. Then he put out his hand and helped the lad to his feet.

"Come in here," he said, "and tell me all about it."

Instinctively the boy caught the accent of sympathy. He knew that this man would deal with him in kindness. There is no organ so exquisitely discriminating of the inner meaning of speech as a child's ear. Walter held out his hand as he would have done to the farmer of Drumquhat, himself, had he been called to accompany Saunders M'Quhirr round the fields to look at the "nowt."

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They went along a gravel walk overgrown with chickweed and moss so thickly that their feet made no sound. The box borders rose a foot and a half high and straggled bushily over the path. On either side were gooseberry bushes, senile and well-nigh barren, their thin, thorny branches trailing on the ground and crawling over each other. Beyond these again was a great beech hedge rising to the sky. Altogether it was a fascinating place to a child; and the boy, who had seen no garden but the square pinafore of "kail-yaird" attached more for appearance than beauty to the front of the farm-house of Drumquhat, thought that it must be like the Garden of Eden. His head rang still from the blow he had received, and a strange, light feeling had come over him as though he were treading on air. The old man walked steadily onward, with a peculiarly short step and a halting swing every three or four steps. They passed dark Irish yews standing up like sentries from a company of the Black Brunswickers. They came out upon a circular opening where the great beech hedge bent into a circle, and the gloomy sentinels stood about at intervals, while high overhead the crisp leafage of the great beeches alternately clashed and muttered. Here there was a great garden seat of stone, at the back of which rose a fountain, long dry, and a couple of statues, chipped and green-patched with blotches of mould. Other two benches of wood from which all traces of paint and varnish had vanished, were also within the gloomy round of this circle. Upon the one which looked along the long avenue up which they had come lay a book and

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a pair of gold spectacles. Here the old man sat down, and made room for the ragged boy to sit beside him; but Walter, warned by the singing in his ears, set himself quietly down on the ground.

"Well, my boy," said the old man, putting on his spectacles, "what is your name?"

"Walter Anderson," said Watty, promptly.

"Anderson is a common name in these parts," said the old man. "What Anderson are you?"

"A' that's no' Andersons are Kerrs in oor pairish," answered Walter. "I come frae Drumquhat, an' they call my mither Nelly Anderson."

"Is Drumquhat a farm?" continued the old man, watching the boy with quiet, observing eyes.

"Ay, that it is," said Walter, his eye lighting up with the pride of possession; "there's no' a farm like it in a' the country side. An' I hae ten cats—"

But his present interlocutor was not so anxious to hear about his menagerie, and interrupted with the further question:

"How did you come here?"

"I gaed onto the muir by Miss Katie's cottage, yesterday morning, and couldna find my road back again. Then it cam' on dark."

"But where did you sleep last night?" asked his friend, more and more astonished at the composure of this bare-legged boy, who answered him simply as if talking to an equal.

"Ablow a heather buss!" said Walter, to whom the past night was now no great matter.

"And what have you had to eat all this time?" was the gentleman's next question.

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"Juist twa teewheet's eggs oot o' the shell, this mornin'," said Walter.

"My poor boy, you must come in and get something to eat," said the old man, kindly. "You must be nearly dead with hunger."

"Na," said Walter, "that I canna; there's a woman there that flyted me an' set the dowgs on me. I canna gang intil that hoose!"

"Janet is hasty, I know," said his friend; "but she will not say anything if I take you in."

With that he took the little lad by the hand and these two went slowly back down the path to the gate where the two great hounds were waiting, couched one on either side of the gate, as though also cut in granite.

"Are you the bonny wee lassie's faither?" asked Walter, turning catechist in his turn.

"I have not that honor," said the old man, gravely. "I'm only her grandfather."

"Will I see her again?" said Walter, who had his notions of good fortune like other people. "Does all this place belong to her?" he continued.

"It will one day," replied his companion.

As they came round the corner of the house there appeared in the doorway his ancient enemy. Walter turned to run, but the hand that held his was too strong, and the old man said, in his quiet, level tones:

"Janet, get this poor lad something; he has been out in the moor all night, and has had nothing to eat since yesterday morning except some wild birds' eggs."

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"Says he sae, Maister Durran'? Weel, I suppose ye ken nae better than believe him."

"Go, Janet, and do as you are told!" calmly continued the old gentleman, whom she addressed as Mr. Durand, and the irate and voluminous person departed grumbling to herself.

So Mr. Durand took Walter into the great hall wherein there were many things most fascinating to his eye. There was a great black man in armor in the corner, many crossed swords and a long row of bell-mouthed muskets and flint-locked pistols. Walter stared all round him in wonder. The floor was of unpainted wood in great squares and crosses and diamonds. The light came softly spraying down, and it was of faint, mysterious colors. There was a great window of colored glass at the western end, and the sun was shining through it. It made a glory like what Walter imagined God to dwell in. He took off his bonnet, as much from reverential awe as from politeness.

They turned down a long passage and their feet echoed as on an empty threshing floor when the flails are laid away. A door swung back on silent hinges, and they were in a room which looked out upon the orchard through which they had come. Round the room were books and books, and yet more books. There was little but books anywhere. The floor was covered in all its corners with books, there were books on chairs, on desks — everywhere but on the ceiling. Walter had not thought that there were so many books in the whole world. One lay open, and there were beautiful pictures of strange white women with dull gold glories round

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their heads. Walter glanced at the open leaf, and he looked again, holding his hands behind him clasped together in the instancy of his desire to touch the beautiful page. Then he pointed with a nod of his head at a figure arrayed in more earthly garments, whose comely figure and red mouth made up for the want of the paler glories of the aureole which surrounded the others.

"That's my mither!" he said.

"Then," said the old man, stooping down to examine the picture on its ivory white sheet of ancient vellum, "your mother is a singularly beautiful woman."

"'Deed, that's what the fowk a' says—a' bena' my 'gran'," returned Walter.

Then looking up as though to recall a more interesting subject, "D'ye no' think that the wee lassie will be coming doon sune?"

Mr. Durand smiled, and said, "First you must get something to eat."

Then Janet, his sometime enemy, came in with a face that still had the thunder-cloud on it, and she laid a place at the table.

"I needna set a knife an' fork for the like o' him," she commented, as if to herself. "Thae gipsies eat wi' their fingers!"

"Set the table as if for myself," said Mr. Durand. "The boy is no gipsy, as very well you know, Janet."

"Weel," said Janet, "your wull is my pleesure, but I canna help my feelin's. It's a guid thing the spunes are powter."

This is how Walter got his first meal, and after he

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had worked his way through it, faithfully and by no means inelegantly, he said his thanksgivings—first to the Heavenly Giver, putting his hands reverently together as his "grandfather" had taught him.

Then to the kind man who had taken him up when he was outcast, he said:

"Thank ye, sir, but mind, though I'm nae gipsy, as ye said, I'm nocht but a herd laddie."

For Walter Anderson did not wish to be kindly treated on any false pretences. Mr. Durand, who had watched him eat his dinner from behind the great book he was reading, looked up and said:

"Now you will come and get a sleep, and then when you are rested we'll see about getting you back home. I'll go and see if any of the folk at the farm know where your Drumquhat is."

He partially cleared a space of papers and pamphlets, or rather he made a sort of nest among them for Walter, wherein the boy curled himself up contentedly and went sound asleep. Mr. Durand spread a rug over him, first feeling his clothes, which were as dry as his own. The June sunshine and wind, and their own well-ventilated freedom had made short work of the wettings of the morning.

Then the old man set himself down into his chair again, and there was the perfection of silence in the empty room. Scented breaths of afternoon air blew in through the open window from the sun-warmed closes of the orchard. It was such a June day as comes but seldom in Scotland. Mr. Durand, with the far-away expression in his face, set himself to think how he would get news of this boy's home, and how he would be returned thither; but he had

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no need to trouble himself, for even as the drowse of the day became too much for him, and he dozed over in his chair, a red farm cart lumbered up to the door, craunching in an unaccustomed manner on the gravel. To the front door came Janet, still nursing her wrath, and with her vocabulary primed for this fresh intrusion. She was a tall, bony, black-browed person, as heavy of hand as she was ready of tongue.

Then out of the cart there descended a woman of that ripe age a little past the middle, sonsy and douce, rotund and rosy as a well-favored apple, but yet with a glitter in her eye like the sun on a bayonet. Clearly not a woman to be despised. It was Walter's "gran," the Mistress of Drumquhat. In her Janet recognized a foeman worthy of her steel. Only the great can estimate the great.

"When Ben Loy put on his cap,
Cruchan Ben wot's weel o' that."

The two women stood looking at each other a long moment with something more than mere recognition in their eyes.

Greek had met Greek.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE TUG OF WAR.

THERE was an ancient war game among the Roman folks, a game they were not fond of themselves, but which they set others to play for them, in which a heavily armored and fully armed soldier was matched against a lithe gladiator equipped only with trident and net. Yet the opponents were not unfairly met. The ponderous harness of the one cumbered while it protected, and the light defencelessness of the other gave play to the agile limb and the ready hand.

This was the game about to be played at the front door of the Mansion House of Deeside.

The two women stood for a little moment looking at each other in silence. Janet stood erect on her pedestal at the top of the steps, secure in that advantage of height which is always a great point in an argument, and inclined therefore to despise her adversary. But she had news of that before long. No one could afford to despise Mary M'Quhirr when it came to the strife of tongues. Her style was not that of the heavy combatant, but rather that of the agile *retiarius* who lets the sword flash and pass till he can take his adversary in his net and dispatch him at his leisure. She stood on the gravel at the distance of a few scornful paces, like a hostile force at parley. Beggars might come close up to the steps, but a besieger draws up his

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forces at a distance respectful at once to himself and to the enemy. The mistress of Drumquhat had on her best bonnet with the purple roses in it, red or white ones being too gaudy. She was thus triply armed in that consciousness of seemly attire which affords vantage ground to all womankind in dealing with one another. With men they know that it does not matter so much.

Mrs. M'Quhirr planted her umbrella, ample in girth to match herself, firmly in the grass-grown gravel, and waited with the fencer's courtesy the enemy's first attack, but it did not come. Janet half turned on her heel, and seemed on the point of marching scornfully off. It was a feint.

"Good day t' ye, Jennet Adair!" said Mrs. M'Quhirr, with an accent as though there was much behind the salutation, which would appear in due time.

"An' what micht hae brocht you here, Mary M'Quhirr?" returned Janet, bending the sullen black brows which met in the middle full upon her.

"Ye hae gotten my wee laddie in the hoose!" said the enemy, plainly.

"I ken naething aboot yer laddie!" said Janet. "Hae ye been renewin' your youth, Mary. I thocht that a' your laddies were man muckle?"

"Never heed my youth, Jennet," said Mrs. M'Quhirr. "Where's the boy that ye ill-used when he cam' to your door starvit and wat, efter a nicht an' a day on the wild moors." She was acting like the detective police "upon information received."

Janet started. She had not counted on this,

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though when she saw the red cart drive up she had expected some demand of the kind. "It's that hempie Mirren!" she said to herself. "Wait till she comes hame!"

But to the present enemy she said:

"I ken nocht aboot ony decent fowk's laddie. D'ye think, Mary M'Quhirr, that I'm responsible for every raggit gipsy loon that gangs trailin' the country, seein' what he can lift. Na, we harbor nae sic like aboot Deeside, whatever ye may do at Drumquhat; but like aye draws to like!"

"Wha was't that brocht him here?" put in the mistress quietly, ignoring the side issues.

"He cam' here wi' a bit wean that kenned nae better. She brocht hame a verra ask* yesterday! But gin the laddie is sae respectable, an' has a richt to ca' himsel' by the name o' Andersons, maybe ye'll tell me wha's the faither o' him!"

This was a shrewd stroke, and rather carried the war into the enemy's country. But the enemy refused to be turned from the main question.

"A' in guid time," said she, "ye'll ken that an' a heap else, Jennet. In the meantime, I demand o' ye—whaur's the boy?"

"Did I no' tell ye that I ken nocht about him," reiterated Janet, warmly.

"Dinna threep lees, Jennet Adair!" said Mary, with great directness.

This was Janet's opening for her strong suite. Glad of any chance to let loose the dogs of war, she set her arms still further akimbo, in the style that

* A newt accounted poisonous in Galloway.

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is called in Scotland "brazen," and undid the strings of her vocabulary.

"An' have I come to my time o' life to be ca'd a leër by the like o' you, Mary M'Whurr—me that has been better off than you in a' gear an' plenishin', in doon-settin' an' on-pittin,' a' the days o' me—me that has been hoosekeeper in the Big Hoose o' Deeside for five year, an' afore that to the minister in his ain manse. D'ye think that I havena heard o' yer ongaun ; ay, an' o' the Canaanitish woman ye keep for the men to rin efter ower aboot ye, that naebody kens onything aboot. This'll be her brat, I'm thinkin', that ye come here makin' sic a cry aboot. Gang hame, Mary M'Whurr, an' tak' yer nameless waistrel frae the respectable hoose o' Deeside an' the company o' decent folk !"

This was a well-sustained front attack, and the enemy seemed victorious at all points, but Mary M'Quhirr was unmoved. Had Saunders been there he would have smiled at Janet's confidence. It took, he knew, quite another policy to circumvent his Mary.

"Since when did ye frequent the society o' decent fowk, Jennet ?" she asked.

"Keep yer ill tongue for yer ain guidman, Mary !" said Janet, now fairly aroused. "Do I no' ken that he canna sae muckle as haud up his heid or daur to say a word for himsel'. It's weel kenned that the puir craitur daurna speak abune his breath !"

"I hae heard o' a man that was driven to his grave wi' the deevin' o' a woman's tongue ; but it rins in my heid that the name o' him wasna

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M'Whurr, but maybe Adair. Ye'll pit me richt gin I'm wrang, Jennet !"

"I'll pit ye richt, ye insolent wumman ; I'll hae ye proclaimed through a' the countryside as the harborer of thieves an' waur nor thieves. I'll mak' ye kenned for what ye are through the sax pairishes, ye leein', ill-tongued randy, that ye are, comin' and pushin' yersel forrit, you an' your gipsy followin', on the hooses o' them that has characters to keep up—"

"I dinna think that ye wull, Jen !" said Mrs. M'Quhirr, serenely.

"An' wha wull prevent me, I wad like to ken ? I hae juist ta'en eneuch frae you an' yours, settin' my ain man's brither against me, an' comin' here wi' yer lees an' yer impidence. I'll mak' Gallawa' ower het to haud ye ; I'll gaur ye birsle, an' when ae side's dune, faith ! I'll turn ye."

"Na," said the mistress of Drumquhat, "ye'll no' do that !"

"An' what for no ?" said Janet, tossing her head in the air.

"Juist because my man's the Clerk o' the Sessions !" said Mary M'Quhirr.

"I waudna care gin he waur the minister," said Janet.

"Verra likely no'; but Jennet, when ye begin to talk aboot characters, maybe ye'll mind that Saunders MacWhurr keeps the Session Records !"

The anger faded suddenly out of Janet's face. It whitened and seemed to fall inward. The belligerent crook of her elbows straightened. The net had closed upon her, and she knew that she was at her

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adversary's mercy. The Session Rocords are in Scotland the nearest thing to the great Books of the Recording Angel.

"They lie," added the victor, for the sake of driving the truth home, in oor ain bedroom press at Drumquhat."

Janet capitulated.

"Come this way!" she said, without another word.

Mrs. M'Quhirr put her umbrella over her shoulder, as the regimental colors are held aloft after victory, and followed the vanquished along the echoing passages of the house of Deeside.

Janet opened the softly turning, padded door of the library, and motioned Mrs. M'Quhirr to go in. She entered and saw a beautiful sight. On the high oaken seat under the great window sat a beautiful old man, asleep over his book, his hair lifting slightly with the vagrant breeze from the orchard. Opposite on the sofa, pillowed among papers, was the golden head of her boy, the truant of the moors, and beside him there was another head, its golden fleece of curls lying upon his cheek. It was little Marion Durand who had fallen asleep upon her knees by the side of the nicest boy she had ever seen. Upon the faces of both there was the rosy flush that comes in sleep to healthy infancy. It was the fairest picture that Mary M'Quhirr had ever looked upon, but somehow she was not so happy as she ought to have been. Why, she could not tell; but she had the grace to be ashamed of the jealous feeling.

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CHAPTER XIV.

A STRANGER COMES TO DRUMQUHAT.

DRUMQUHAT was expecting a visitor. There were white, mysterious whirlies on the stone floor of the kitchen, crosses and crooks alternately from the settle bed in the corner to the vast ingle nook where in the great pot boiled and bubbled the dinner mash for Saunders' clamorous pigs in their white-washed sty at the foot of the hill loaning. Now Mary M'Quhirr's house was always "snod." A visitor might come at any time and she be nowise shamed; but to-day there was such a floor that dinner might well have been served upon it. The irons and rein-rings on the wall flashed as though made of the precious metals. It was Nelly Anderson who had polished them, much to the surprise and gratification of the Mistress of Drumquhat. At three in the afternoon the two were sitting in the room, Mrs. M'Quhirr with her "bettermous" frock on and Nelly dressed with her unvarying good taste. Each had a piece of work in her hands, the mistress a pair of "rig-and-fur" stockings for the guidman, and the younger woman a bit of plain white seam for the boy. Walter was by distinction "The Boy" at Drumquhat, the stalwart sons of the house being collectively "The Boys."

The terror of his disappearance and the anxiety during the terrible time before the red cart brought

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him back had altered his mother more than all the previous five years. The past was struggling back, and the legacy that it brought was not the happiest; but there was an awakening glamor of love in her eyes as she looked at her boy, and Walter, too, clave to her in quite a new way. He loved his "gran" as much as ever, but it was easy to see that without loving her less, his mother was far more in his thoughts than hitherto. But with the renaissance of the soul came the partial return of memory, and she seemed to herself to walk ever on the verge of some great precipice. She awoke sometimes in the night, clasping Walter close to her bosom, and crying out in an agony of fear.

It was old Mr. Durand, Walter's friend from the Big House of Deeside, whom the Drumquhat folk were expecting. He had promised to come when Mrs. M'Quhirr drove off that day with her boy in the cart—a sedate triumph in her eye, after her great victory over Janet Adair. Since then he had written again and again concerning his little friend, and the beech-walled walk past the sundial was lovelier than before. The lad had taken his heart, and if he had been inclined to forget, Marion would have reminded him at least a hundred times in a day. Indeed, but for her and her chatter, the old house had been a dull place. She flashed here and there like a wind-borne fay, her hair glancing in the sun—never five minutes in one place. At Drumquhat Walter had been out for hours watching the hill road which led from Deeside, but had fallen in with no one but Archibald Grierson, whose studies still took him often to the moorland, never

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again to repeat the experiences of that June gloaming.

Now, Walter and Archibald were firm friends, and they amused themselves among the peat hags and gathered bunches of white heather as they came homeward, Archie's heart beginning to beat with the expectation of seeing his sweetheart, and Walter's rejoicing to bring his mother such an armful of good-luck. As they turned to look back over the moor they saw a thin, dark man coming towards them along the undulating line of the march dyke. He had the look of a commercial man in a good way. When he came up with them he asked if he were on the right way for the farm of Drumquhat. There was an accent in his voice which the student disapproved of, also a way of seeming able to look through a man and see something unpleasant on the far side.

"Does one Ellen Anderson live there?" he asked.

"Mrs. Anderson lives there," said Archibald Grierson, with some quiet emphasis.

"That's my mither!" said Wattie.

The stranger looked at him with a sharp side-long glance, as though there were a new interest for him in the lad, but he made no further remark. When they came through the "liggate" which led into the farm-town, Saunders met them, in rough homespun just as he came from the hay-field. He looked inquiringly at the new-comer, who remained silent, as though unaccustomed to give information regarding himself. Archie Grierson explained, somewhat unwillingly, that this gentleman had

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come to see Mrs. Anderson, pausing to give him an opportunity of explaining further.

"We are pleased to see you," said Saunders M'Quhirr, with his usual courtesy. The man nodded curtly, but with no sign of any reciprocal warmth of feeling.

"Will ye come ben?" said the master.

They went through the blue kitchen door, past the cool water-cans in which the sunshine was flickering, into the "room," where sat the mistress and Walter's mother, expecting quite another visitor. Mrs. M'Quhirr rose hospitably to give her visitors seats. It crossed her mind that the newcomer was some one whom Mr. Durand had sent. But the visitor, though not unkindly in his private relations, was in no mood for courtesies.

He looked straight at the younger woman, who sat unconcernedly over her work, her beautiful hands moving to and fro with a new-born energy and verve.

"Your name is Ellen Anderson, is it not?" he said, in a high, distinct tone.

She looked up with her first calm glance at him, and replied simply:

"That is my name!"

"Then," said the man, "I arrest you in the Queen's name for the murder of Herbert Peyton?"

If the Trump of Judgment had suddenly pealed in that fair, well-garnished room in the farm-house of Drumquhat it would have caused infinitely less consternation. The mistress clutched the mantlepiece to keep herself from falling, knocking down a pink china dog, and stooping dazedly to pick up the

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pieces. She was for once quite bereft of words. Saunders stood a moment and then strode forward to take the man by the neck. Archie Grierson moved instinctively towards the woman who had become his life, whose nimble fingers had not ceased even with the startling declaration. Walter ran to his mother and clung round her neck, ignorant of what had happened, but conscious that some sore evil had befallen, and that this man whom he had brought to the farm was the means of it.

Nelly Anderson herself was the only perfectly calm person in the room. She finished her seam, calmly folded it away, and rose to her full height, lifting her boy in her arms with a strong, unconscious movement.

"It is quite true, I had forgotten; I will go with you!" she said.

It was the man who had watched the cab drive away from the hospital door nearly six years before. The silent foot of Justice had followed her far.

CHAPTER XV.

ANOTHER VISITOR.

"But first let me see your authority!" said a new voice from the doorway to the London officer. It was the clear, quiet voice of Felix Durand. He had entered without any one being there to receive him. With his cool, keen eyes, and the wonderful

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delicacy and transparency of his complexion, he looked like the denizen of some other world come among the weather-tanned Galloway skins. The officer, recognizing the tone of authority and experience in affairs, at once turned and showed his crown-topped badge, and drew from his pocket a sheet of foolscap which he presented to his challenger. He was not exultant, but he felt that natural desire to bring a very long quest to an end, and he somewhat resented this interference, after the confession which had just been made. The old man looked the document carefully over.

"You word your warrants better in your country than in mine. We always have an alternative charge. You can, I see, only arrest for murder?"

"That is so!" said the man, not seeing his interlocutor's drift.

"Then, let me tell you, your warrant is not worth the paper it is written on."

"That's nonsense," said the officer, "after what we have heard."

The old man quietly took a letter from his pocket.

"Herbert Peyton is not dead!" he said. "This is a letter from him that I had this morning."

The London detective took it in his hand, examined it scrupulously, and returned it with a smile.

"You know very well," he said, "that this is no evidence. Be good enough to stand out of my way, and you, ma'am, bring the young woman what she needs for her journey."

Felix Durand drew himself up,

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"Officer," he said, "you are a good man doing your duty, but I have been used to taking life and death responsibilities for forty years in greater affairs than this. You cannot leave this house till you get further instructions from Scotland Yard."

As he said this, with inconceivable rapidity he laid a revolver which he had taken out of the detective's side pocket on the drawers' head behind, and motioned Saunders to take it away. Saunders took it like a well-drilled soldier.

The officer rushed towards the door, but the broad shoulders of Saunders and his eldest son completely filled up the entrance. He turned quickly in the direction of the small window, but Archie Grierson sat on the ledge.

"Bear witness, all of you, I declare myself deforced in the discharge of my duty," he said.

"You will hear what is your duty before you leave this room. We will do nothing illegal. Mrs. Anderson will remain here with you. Mrs. M'Quhirr will bring you what refreshments are necessary."

By this time another stalwart son of the house and the herd showed themselves outside the window, and Mr. Durand beckoned Archibald Grierson from his post.

"Ride with this telegram," he said, "to the office in Cairn Edward, and don't come back till you have a telegram from Scotland Yard. I need not tell you to ride your best."

He sat down and with the ready pen of the man of affairs, who has lived his life in the midst of the gravest issues, he wrote without pause :

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"DUBOIS, 13 TAVISTOCK ST., LEICESTER SQUARE. *Report in name Dubois at Scotland Yard, authenticating yourself from the French Embassy. Imperative. Felix.*"

CHAPTER XVI.

ARCHIE GRIERSON'S SECOND RIDE.

THE company in the little picture-hung, shell-garnished parlor of Drumquhat was for some time a silent one. The London stranger sat with his arms folded and gazed abstractedly at the toe of his right foot, which gently waved to and fro. Saunders at first tried to enliven him by discourse of the crops and the weather, topics in which Galloway expects its visitors to be interested, but the officer had only glowered silently at him as one who sees his cherished objects elude his grasp. Now and then he turned his eyes furtively to Nelly Anderson, evidently trying to re-construct a well-known story in the light of a new personality. Felix Durand sat now by the window and looked over the little pinafore of kitchen garden, with the poppies, bachelors' buttons, and gardeners' garters standing up here and there among the cabbages, which was the pride of the mistress of Drumquhat. Beyond the garden were the corn slopes, whitening in the brisk air of a splendid autumn. Then, over the cornfields rose the sullen eyebrows of the moors and the rolling upland which the sun was now turn-

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ing into leagues of purple till it reached, in a long, straight horizon line, the rippled margin of the clouds of evening.

"Do you remember," said the old man, speaking as though in a kind of dream, "that night at Saint Germain, when you and I walked along the great terrace by the pavilion of Francois Quatre? Ah, how many hopes have been blasted since then of yours and mine, Nelly? You were a stripling girl of fifteen, just bursting out of your plain frocks into womanhood. We thought then that in a year we could give France her own, and pull down the throne of the man of December! But the time is not yet. It comes, though—it is near!"

The old man's eyes glistened. There was a shining radiance in them, and as he spoke the great, quiet eyes of Nelly Anderson caught fire. There was always a slumberous spark like the imprisoned fire-flame in the opal in the solemn depths of their violet. The London officer raised his head and listened with unconcealed interest. Even Mrs. M'Quhirr, whom the accumulated excitement had crushed, till demands were made upon her hospitalities, brisked up a little, and once more placed the tray of refreshments, and the plates of scones and the basket of shortbread within reach of her unwilling guest. As he listened, his hand kept stealing out unconsciously, and while his eyes never left the face of Felix Durand, his inner man was undeniably being duly fortified. The mistress looked pleased, and to this day holds a secret, pious opinion that the immediate event was as much due to her scones and "greybeard" as to Mr. Durand's messages.

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"We did not pull the gray Emperor down, Nelly, though we gave him a shake," said Mr. Durand. "But many things have happened since then. If you only wait long enough, you will see a man in his true colors. Nothing is so sure as the retribution of pretence."

"Do you remember, Felix," said the young woman, in quite another voice to any that she had ever used since she came to Drumquhat, something clearer and sharper. "No, you can't have forgotten the walks through the forest between St. Germain and Poissy, and the chairs piled in the great open spaces under the trees. You were good to me, your words were true words, and everything you told me has come to pass."

"It is not as bad as it might have been, *chèrie*. Had I had the doing of it, Herbert Peyton had not escaped so easily. Do not trouble your mind, my girl, you did nothing to him that he was not the better of."

"But where is he now, and what is he doing?" queried Nelly Anderson, a strong shudder of disgust shaking her, and even on that mild evening causing her to draw her shawl closer about her shoulders.

"Why, what could he be at but the old treacherous occupation—running with the hares and hunting with the hounds!"

Felix Durand had been noticing the keen curiosity of the London officer, who, mellowing under the enlarging influences of Mrs. M'Quhirr's tray, was inclined to continue the conversation on quite other terms.

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But at this moment a clatter of hoofs was heard in the yard, and in a few moments Archie Grierson pushed the parlor door open and entered, the white dust of the highway on his very eyebrows. He handed a dispatch to the officer, who opened it with a single dexterous movement, flinging at the same time the envelope on the floor, and immediately turned to Nelly Anderson.

"I have to express my sincere regret for the trouble and annoyance that has been caused you," he said, "and to bid you good-evening," and he turned to go.

But Saunders stood in the doorway. This was not his idea of a leave-taking.

"Na, na," he said; "ye'll bide onyway till the mistress mak's ye a cup o' tea, an' Aleck will tak' ye ower to Cairn Edward in the machine."

Nelly Anderson threw her arms round Felix Durand's neck and kissed him.

"Père Felix," she said, very softly, "I will always do what you tell me now."

"Aye, my lass," said he, gently, "it would have been better for you if you had begun sooner."

This was his only word of reproach.

Then, turning about to leave the room, she caught sight of Archie standing ruddily blushing through his dust, and looking very wistfully at her. With a sudden impulse, which was very charming to see, she kissed him also. Then she walked swiftly to her own room, and, falling on her knees, she prayed the first prayer that she had prayed for years, loosening all her heart before the Lord.

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CHAPTER XVII.

A SABBATH DAY AT DRUMQUHAT.

WALTER ANDERSON often says in these latter days that his life owed much of its bent to his first days of the week at Drumquhat.

The Sabbath mornings broke over the farm like a benediction. It was a time of great stillness and exceeding peace. It was generally believed in the parish that Mrs. M'Quhirr had trained her cocks to crow in a fittingly subdued way on that day. The Sabbath light seemed brighter, and the necessary duties were early gone about in order that perfect quiet might surround the farm during the hours of the day. As Walter is of opinion that his Sabbaths were so important, it may be well to describe one of them accurately. It will then be obvious that his memory has been playing him tricks, and that he has remembered only those parts which were to his credit—a common eccentricity of all memories.

It is a thousand pities if in this chronicle Walter has been represented as a good boy. He was seldom so-called by the authorities about Drumquhat. There he was usually referred to as "that loon," "the *hyule*," "Wattie, ye mischeevious boy." He was a stirring lad and his restlessness frequently brought him into trouble. He remembers his "grannie's" Bible lessons on the green turn of the road, and he is of opinion now that they did him a

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great deal of good. It is not for an outside historian to contradict him, but it is certain that his "gran" had to exercise a good deal of patience to induce him to give due attention, and a modicum of suasion that could not be called moral to make him learn his verses and his Psalm. Indeed, to bribe the boy with a book was the only way of inspiring in him the love of Scriptural learning. There was a book packman who came from Balmathrapple once a month, and by the promise of a new missionary map of the world, with the Protestants in red, floating like cream on the top, and the pagans sunk in black at the bottom, Wattie could be induced to learn nearly anything. Walter was, however, of the opinion that the map was a most imperfect production. He thought that the portion of the world occupied by the Reformed Presbyterians ought to have been much more prominently charted. This omission he blamed on Ned Kenna, the bookman, who was a Free. Walter looked for the time when all the world, from great blank Australia to the upper Icy Pole, should become Cameronian. He anticipated a time when the black savages would have to quit eating one another, and learn the Shorter Catechism. He chuckled when he thought of them attacking *effectual calling*. He knew his duty to his fellows very well, and he did it to the best of his ability. It was when he met a Free Kirk boy, to throw a stone at him, or alternatively, if the boy were a girl, to put out his tongue at her. This he did, not from any special sense of superiority, but for the good of their souls.

When Walter awoke the sun had long been up

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and all sounds of labor, usually so loud, were hushed about the farm. There was a breathless silence, and the boy knew even in his sleep that it was Sabbath morning. He arose, and unassisted arrayed himself for the day. Then he stole forth, hoping that he would get his porridge before the "Buik" came on. Through the little end window he could see his "grandfather" moving up and down, leaning on his staff—his tall, stooped figure very clear against the background of beeches. He looked often upward in self-communion, and sometimes groaned aloud in the instancy of his unspoken prayer. His great brow rose like the wall of a fortress, and a stray white lock on it stirred in the crisp air. Wattie was about to omit his prayers in his eagerness for his porridge, but the sight of his grandfather induced him to change his mind. He knelt reverently down, and was so found when his mother came in. She stood for a moment on the threshold, and silently beckoned the good mistress of the house forward to share in the touching sight. But neither of the women knew how near the boy's prayers were to being omitted entirely that morning, and what is more, they would not have believed it had they been informed of it by the angel Gabriel. For this is the manner of women; this is the way that mothers are made, and may the God of faith bless them for it! The man has, indeed, been driven out of Paradise, but the woman, for whose expulsion we have no direct Scriptural authority, certainly carries with her materials for constructing a Paradise out of her own generous faith and belief in us poor creatures. Often we men

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do our poor best, not because we are anxious to do the good for its own sake, but because we know that some woman expects it of us. The world were a still sorrier world but for this.

The dwelling-house of Drumquhat was a low, one-storied house of a common enough pattern. It stood at one angle of the white fortalice of buildings which surrounded the "yard." Over the kitchen and "ben the hoose," there was a "laft," where the "boys" slept. The roof of this upper floor was unceiled, and through the crevices sifted upon the sleepers the winter snows. Yet were there no finer lads, no more sturdy and well set-up men, than the sons of the farmhouse of Drumquhat. Many a morning ere Aleck rose from his bed in the black dark to look to the sheep, before lighting his candle, he brushed off from the coverlet a full arm-sweep of powdery snow. It was a sign of Walter's emancipation from boyhood when he insisted on leaving his mother's cosy little wall chamber and climbing up the ladder with the "boys" to their loft under the eaves. But it went with a sudden pang to his mother's heart to think that nevermore should she go to sleep with her boy clasped in her arms. Such times will come to mothers, and they must abide them in silence. Another such occasion is when she realizes that another woman is before her in her son's heart. She feels the Eden curse more at such times than even in the bitterness of bringing her children into the world. The whole family of Saunders M'Quhirr was collected every Sabbath morning at the "Buik." It was a solemn time. No one was absent, or could be absent for

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any purpose whatever. The great Bible, rough-coated in the hairy hide of a calf, was brought down from the press and laid at the table end. Saunders sat down before it and bowed his head. There was a silence that could be felt. At this time every Sabbath morning Walter resolved to be a good boy for the whole week. The Psalm was reverently given out, two lines at a time—

> "They in the Lord that firmly trus
> Shall be like Zion hill—"

and sung to the high, quavering strains of Coleshill garnished with endless quavers and grace-notes. The chapter was now read with a simple trust and manfulness like that of an ancient patriarch. At this portion of the service the most terrible thing that ever happened at Drumquhat took place. Walter had just gone to school during the past year, and had been placed in the "sixpenny," but had promptly "trapped" his way to the head of the class, and so into the more noble "tenpenny," which he entered before he was six. The operation of "trapping" was simply performed. When a mistake was made in pronunciation, repetition or spelling, any pupil further down the class held out his hand, snapping the finger and thumb like a pop-gun Nordenfeldt. The master's pointer skimmed rapidly down the line, and if no one in higher position answered, the "trapper," providing that his emendation was accepted, was instantly promoted to the place of the "trapped." The master's "taws" were a wholesome deterrent of too persistent or mistaken trapping, and in addition the trapped boys

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sometimes rectified matters at the back of the school at the play hour, when fists became a high court of appeal. Walter had many fights—"Can ye fecht?" being the recognized greeting of a new-comer at Whinnyliggate school. When this was asked of Walter, he replied, modestly, that he did not know, whereupon his enemy without provocation incontinently smote him on the nose. Him our boy from the heather promptly charged, literally with tooth and nail, overbore to the dust, and when he held him there, proceeded summarily to disable him for further conflict as he had often seen Royal do when that mild dog went forth to war. Walter's motto was also "Defence, not Defiance," and he could not at all understand why he was dragged off his assailant by the assembled school, and soundly cuffed for a young savage who fought like the beasts. Wattie knew that this objection was unreasonable, for whom else had he seen fight besides the beasts. In due time he learned to fight legitimately enough, and took his share of the honors of war; but the reputation of a reserve of savagery did him no harm, and induced many an elder boy who had been trapped to forego the pleasure of "warming him after the schule comes out," which was the recognized challenge of Whinnyliggate chivalry.

But this morning at the Buik, when the solemnity of the week had culminated, and the portion was being read, Walter detected a quaint antiquity in the pronunciation of a Bible name. His hand shot out, cracking like a pistol, and while the family waited for the heavens to fall, Walter boldly

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"trapped" the priest of the household at his own family altar!

Saunders M'Quhirr stopped, glanced one sharp, severe glance at the boy's eager face. But even as he looked his face mellowed into what his son Aleck to this day thinks may have been the ghost of a smile. But this he mentions to no one, for after all Saunders is his father.

The Book was closed. "Let us pray," he said.

The prayer was not one to be forgotten. There was a yearning refrain in it, the cry for more worthiness in those whom God had so highly favored. Simple, reverent, direct—it was a model prayer. Saunders was allowed to be highly gifted in intercession. But he was also considered to have some strange notions for a God-fearing man.

For instance, he would not permit any of his children to be taught by heart any prayer besides the Lord's Prayer. After repeating that, they were encouraged to ask from God whatever they wanted, and were never reproved, however strange or incongruous their supplications might be. Saunders simply told them that if what they asked was not for their good they would not get it—a fact which, he said, "they had as lieve learn sune as syne."

This excellent but unorthodox theory of prayer was certainly productive of curious results. Aleck is recorded in the family archives to have interjected the following petition into his devotions. While saying his own prayers he had been keeping a keen fraternal eye upon sundry delinquencies of his younger brother. These having become too outrageous, Aleck continued without break in his sup-

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plications—"And now, Lord, will you please excuse me till I gang an' kick that loon Rab, for he'll no behave himsel'!" So the spiritual exercises were interrupted, and in Aleck's belief the universe waited till discipline allowed of the petitionary thread to be taken up.

The "Buik" being over, the red cart rattled to the door to convey such of the church-goers as were not able to walk all the weary miles to the Cameronian kirk in Cairn Edward. The stalwart, long-legged sons had cut across a shorter way by the Big Hoose and the Deeside kirk. Both the cart and the walkers passed on the way a good many churches, both Established and Free, but they never so much as looked the road they were on. This hardly applied to Aleck, whose sweetheart (for the time being) attended the Free kirk at Whinnyliggate. He knew within his own heart that he would have liked to turn in there, and the consciousness of his iniquity gave him an acute sense of the fallen nature of man, at least till he got out of sight of the spireless rigging of the kirk, and out of hearing of the jow of its bell. Then his spirits rather rose to think that he had resisted temptation. Also, he dared not for his life have done anything else, for his father's discipline, though kindly, was strict and patriarchal. And, moreover, there was a lass, a daughter of the Arkland grieve, whose curls he rather liked to see in the seat before him. He had known her when he went to the neighboring farm to harvest, for in that lowland district the corn was all cut and led before it was time to begin on the scanty upland

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crop which was gathered into the barns of Drumquhat. Luckily, she sat in a line with the minister, and when she was there two sermons were not too long.

The clean red farm cart rattled into the town of Cairn Edward at five minutes past eleven. The burghers looked up and said "Hoo is the clock?" Some of them went so far as to correct any discrepancy in their timekeepers, for all the world knew that the Drumquhat cart was not a moment too soon or too late as long as Saunders had the driving of it. Times had not been good of late, and for some years, indeed, ever since the imposition of the tax on light-wheeled vehicles, the "tax-cart" had slumbered wheelless in the back of the peat-shed, and the Drumquhat folk had driven a well-cleaned, heavy wheeled cart both to kirk and market. But they were respected in spite of their want of that admirable certificate of character: "He is a respectable man. He keeps a gig." One good man in Whinnyliggate says to this day that he had a good upbringing. He was brought up by his parents to fear God and respect the Drumquhat folks!

Walter generally went to church now, ever since his "gran" had tired of conveying him to the back field overlooking the valley of the Black Water of Dee. He was fond of going there to see the tents of the invading army of navvies who were carrying the granite rock-cuttings and heavy embankments of the Portpatrick Railway through the wilds of the Galloway moors. But Mary M'Quhirr struck work

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one day when the "infant," being hungry for a piece, said calmly :

"D'ye no' think that we can gang hame? My mither will be awa' to the kirk by noo !"

On the long journey to church Walter had nominally accompanied the cart, and occasionally he had seated himself on the clean straw which filled its bottom ; but most of the time this was far too fatiguing an occupation for him. On the plea of walking up the hills, he ranged about on either side of the highway, scenting the ground like a young collie. He even gathered flowers when his "grandfather" was not looking, and his mother or his "gran," who were not so sound in the faith, aided and abetted him by concealing them when Saunders looked around. The master sat, of course, on the front of the cart and drove, but occasionally he cast a wary eye round, and if he saw that they were approaching any houses, he would stop the cart and make Walter get in. On these occasions he would fail to observe it even if Walter's hands contained a posy of wild flowers as big as his head. His blindness was remarkable in a man whose eyesight was so good. The women folk in the cart generally put the proceeds of these forays under the straw or else dropped them quietly overboard before entering Cairn Edward.

The old Cameronian kirk sits on a hill, and is surrounded by trees, a place both bieldy and heartsome. The only thing that the Cameronians seriously felt the want of was a burying-ground round about it. A kirk is never quite commodious and cheery without monuments to read and "thruchs"

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to sit upon and "ca' the crack." Now, however, they have made a modern church of it, and a steeple has been set down before it, for all the world as if Cleopatra's needle had been added to the front wall of a barn. But Cairn Edward Cameronian kirk has long been a gate of heaven. To many that entered it the solemn words heard there have brought the beginning of a new life and another world. Of old, as the morning Psalm went upward in a grand, slow surge, there was a sense of hallowed days in the very air, and to this day Walter has a general idea that the mansions of the New Jerusalem are of the barn class of architecture and whitewashed inside, which will not show so much when it rubs off as it used to do on plain earthly "blacks."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CAMERONIAN DIET OF WORSHIP.

THERE were not many distractions for a boy of active habits and restless tendencies during the long double service of two hours and a bittock in the Cameronian Kirk of Cairn Edward. The minister was the Rev. Richard Cameron, the youngest scion of a famous Covenanting family. He had come to Cairn Edward as a stripling, and he was now looked upon as the future high priest of the sect in succession to his father, at that time minister of the metropolitan temple of the denomination.

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Tall, erect, with flowing black hair that swept his shoulders, and the exquisitely chiselled face of some marble Apollo, Richard Cameron was an ideal minister of the Hill Folk. His splendid eyes glowed with a still and chastened fire, and he walked with his hands behind him and his head thrown back, up the long aisle from the vestry. His successor was a much smaller, dapper man, who wore black gloves when preaching, and who seemed to dance a minuet under his spectacles as he walked. Alas! to him, also, came in due time the sore heart and the bitter draught. They say in Cairn Edward that no man ever left that white church on the wooded knoll south of the town, and was happier for the change. The leafy garden where many ministers have written their sermons has seemed to them a paradise in after years, and their cry has been, "Oh, why left I my hame!"

But it was happy days for Richard Cameron when he brought his books and his violin to the manse that nestled at the foot of the hill. He came among men strict with a certain staid severity concerning things that they counted material, but yet far more kindly hearted and charitable than of recent years they have got credit for.

Saunders did not object to the minister's violin, being himself partial to a game at the ice, and willing that another man should also have his chosen relaxation. Then, when the young man began to realize himself, and lay about him in the pulpit, there were many who would tell how they remembered his father—preaching on one occasion the sermon that "fenced the tables," on the fast day

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before the communion, when the partitions were out and the church crowded to the door—being oppressed with the heat, craved the indulgence of the congregation to be allowed to remove his coat, and thereafter in his shirt sleeves struck terror into all by denunciations against heresy and infidelity, against all evil doing and evil speaking, barring the table of the Lord to "all such as have danced or followed after playactors, or have behaved themselves unseemly at Kelton Hill or other gatherings of the ungodly, or have frequented public houses beyond what is expedient for lawful entertainment, against all such as swear minced oaths, such as 'losh,' 'gosh,' 'fegs,' 'certes,' 'faith,' and all such as swear by heaven or earth, or visit their neighbors' houses upon the Lord's Day, saving as may be necessary in coming to the house of the Lord."

The young man could not be expected at once to come up to the high standard of this, which indeed proved to be too strong meat for any but a few of the sterner office-bearers, who had never heard their brother elders' weaknesses so properly handled before; but they had nevertheless to go round the people and tell them that what the great city doctor and father in the faith had said was to be understood spiritually, chiefly as a warning to other denominations, or there had been a thin kirk and but one spare table instead of the usual four or five at once on the day of high communion in the Cairn Edward Cameronian kirk.

Walter could be a quiet boy in church for a certain time. He did not very much enjoy the service

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except when they sang "Old Hundred" or "Scarborough," when he would throw back his head and warble delightedly with the best. But he listened attentively to the prayers, and tracked the minister over that well-kenned ground. Walter was prepared for his regular stint, but he did not hold with either additions or innovations. He liked to know how far he was on in the prayer, and it was with an exhausted gasp of relief that he caught the curious lowering of the preacher's voice which tells that the "Amen" is within reasonable distance. The whole congregation were good at that, and began to relax themselves from their standing postures as the minister's shrill pipe rounded the corner and tacked for the harbor; but Walter was always before them. Once however, after he had seated himself, he was put to shame by the minister suddenly darting off on a new excursion, having remembered some other needful supplication which he had omitted. Walter never quite regained his confidence in Mr. Cameron after that. He had always thought him a good and reliable man hitherto, but now he was not so sure.

Once, when the minister visited the farm of Drumquhat, Walter, being caught by his "gran" in the very act of escaping, was haled to instant execution with the shine of the soap on his cheeks and hair. But the minister was kind, and did not ask for anything more abstruse than "Man's Chief End." He inquired, however, if the boy had ever seen him before.

"Ow, ay," said Walter, confidently; "ye're the man that sat at the back window!"

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This was the position of the manse seat, and at the fast-day service Mr. Cameron had sat there when a stranger preached. Not the least of Walter's treasures, now in his library, is a dusky little squat book called "The Peep of Day," with an inscription on it in Mr. Cameron's minute back hand: "To Walter Anderson, from the man at the back window."

The minister was grand that day. He preached his two discourses with only the interval of a Psalm and a prayer, and his second sermon was on the spiritual rights of a Covenanted kirk, as distinguished from the worldly emoluments of an Erastian establishment. Nothing is so popular as to prove to people what they already believe, and that day's sermon was long remembered among the Cameronians. It redd up their position so clearly, and settled their precedence with such finality, that Walter, hearing that the Frees had done far wrong in not joining the Church of the Protests and Declarations in 1843, resolved to have his schoolbag full of good road metal on the following morning, in order to impress the Copland boys with a sense of their position. But as the sermon proceeded on its conclusive way, the bowed ranks of the attentive Hill Folk bent further and further forward, during the long periods of the preacher, and when at the close of each they drew in a long, united breath like the sighing of the wind, and leaned back in their seats, Walter's head began to nod over the chapters of First Samuel, which he was spelling out. David's wars were a great comfort to him during long sermons. Gradually he dropped asleep,

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and wakened occasionally with a start when his "gran" nudged him when Saunders happened to look his way. As the little fellow's mind thus came time and again to the surface, he heard snatches concerning the Sanquhar Declarations and the Covenants, National and Solemn League, till it seemed to him as though the trump of doom would crash before the minister had finished. And he wished it would. Anything for a change! But at last, in sheer desperation, having slept apparently about a week, he rose with his feet upon the seat, and in his clear, childish treble he said, still dazed with sleep:

"Will that man no' sune be dune?"

It was thus that the movement for short services began in the Cameronian kirk at Cairn Edward. They are an hour and twenty minutes now—a sore declension, as all will admit.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RETURN FROM CHURCH.

AGAIN the red farm cart rattled out of the town in the silence of the hedges. For the first mile or two the church folk returning to the moor farm might meet and frankly reprove with word or look the "Sunday walkers," who bit, shamefacedly, as well they might, the ends of hawthorn twigs, and communed together apparently without saying a

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word to each other. There were not many pairs of sweethearts among them—any that were being put down as "regardless Englishry," the spawn of the strange, uncanny-like building by the lock-side that the "General" had been intending to finish any time these half-dozen years. Mostly the walkers were young men with companions of their own sex and age, who were anxious to qualify as being broad in their views. Times have changed now, for we hear that quite respectable folk, even town councillors, take their walks openly on Sabbath afternoons. But it was otherwise in those days.

But none of their own kind did the Drumquhat folk meet or overtake, till at the bottom rise of the mile-long Whinnyliggate Wood the red cart came up with the three brave little old maids who, leaving a Free kirk at their very door, and an Established over the hill, made their way seven long miles to the true kirk of the persecutions. It had always been a grief to them that there was no Clavers now to make them testify up to the chin in Solway tide, or with a great fiery match between their fingers to burn to the bone; but what they could they did. They trudged every Sabbath day, with their dresses "fate and snod" and their linen like the very snow, to listen to the gospel preached according to their thinking. They were all the smallest of women, but their hearts were great, and those who knew them hold them far more worthy of honor than the three lairds of the parish.

Of them all only one remains, but their name and honor shall not be forgotten on Deeside while fire burns and water runs, if Walter's biographer can

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help it. The M'Taggarts were all distinguished by their sturdy independence, but Jen M'Taggart was the cleverest with her head. The parish minister had once taken Jen for a person of limited intelligence, but he altered his opinion after Jen had taken him through hands upon the Settlement of "Aughty-aught" (1688), when the Cameronians refused to enter into the Church of Scotland as re-constructed by the Revolution of Settlement.

The three sisters had a little shop which the two less active tended, while Mary, the business woman of the family, resorted to Cairn Edward every Monday and Thursday with and for a miscellaneous cargo. As she plodded the weary way, she divided herself between conning the sermons of the previous Sabbath, arranging her packages, and anathematizing the donkey. "Ye person—ye awfu' person!" was her severest denunciation. Billy was a donkey of parts. He knew what houses to call at, and it is said that he always brayed when he had to pass the Established kirk manse to express his feelings. But Billy was not a true Cameronian. It was always suspected that he could not be much more than Cameronian by marriage—a "tacked on one," in short. His path was by no means straightforward, as that of one sound in the faith ought to be. It was easy to tell when Billy and his cart had passed along the road, for his tracks did not go forward, like all other wheel marks, but meandered hither and thither across the road, as though he were weaving some intricate web of his own devising. He was called the Whinnyliggate Express, and his record was a mile and a quarter an hour

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good going. Mary herself was generally tugging at him to come on. She pulled Billy, and Billy pulled the cart; but nevertheless it was the will of Billy that was law. Walter was very glad to have the M'Taggarts on the cart, both because he was allowed to walk all the time, and because he hoped to get Mary into a good temper against next Tuesday. Mary came the Drumquhat way twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, and as Wattie went to school he met her, and, being allowed by his "gran" one penny to spend at Mary's cart, he generally occupied most of church time, and all school-time for a day or two before these red-letter occasions, on deciding what he would have. It did not make choice any easier that alternatives were strictly limited. While he was slowly and laboriously making up his mind as to the long-drawn-out merits of four farthing biscuits, the way that "Abernethies" melted in the mouth arose before him with irresistible force, and just as he had settled to have these, the thought of charming explorations after the currants in a couple of "cookies" was really too much for him; while the solid and enduring charms of a penny "Jew's roll," into which he could put his lump of butter, often entirely unsettled his mind. The consequence was that Wattie had always to make up his mind in the immediate presence of the object, and at that time neither Billy nor Mary would brook very long delays. It was important, therefore, to propitiate Mary as much as possible, so that she might not cut him short and proceed on her way without supplying his wants, as she had done once before. On that occasion she said:

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"D'ye think Mary M'Taggart has naething else in the world to do but stan' still as long as it pleases you to gaup there! Gin ye canna tell us what ye want, ye can e'en do withoot! Gee up, Billy; come oot o' the roadside, ye're aye eatin', eat-eatin', ye bursen craitur ye!"

Walter had lived long enough to know on which side his bread was buttered, so he was especially kind to Mary when she got a ride up in the Drumquhat cart on Sabbaths. The ride had been a happy one, and the day a memorable one for all. It was destined to be more memorable still ere it was ended.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SERPENT IN PARADISE.

The red cart was now rapidly approaching the parting of the ways, or, as the place was called in the parish, "The Upper Cross Roads." One of the turnpikes led westward to the ferry over the Dee Water, through rocky glens and by gleaming hill tarns, while the other continued over the moors and by the loch-side to the village of Whinnyliggate. A stone's throw before the meeting of the roads was a little bridge over an insignificant but irresponsible brook—a burn which executed the most astonishing cuttings and curves, and withal wimpled so enticingly that a baby could not have looked more innocent. But the neighbor farmers could tell you,

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what the eye of the geologist would have detected at a glance, that every winter the Skyreburn came down twenty feet deep, and for twenty-four hours or so ran yeasty white and peaty brown sixty yards across in the narrows and a mile wide over the meadow levels. As the cart drove past the bridge a man turned and looked at the company. He had been leaning on the low granite-coped parapet, idly dropping pebbles into the water, yet he turned as though expecting to see something he looked for. Saunders gave him "Good-day" courteously, as he did to gentle and semple, but the stranger, whose clothes were of another cut and country, looked over Saunders' head with a strange, cold, fixed look, and said no word. The cart swept on, rattling and jolting, Brown Jean tossing her head at the top of the brae to get the first glint of her stable end. Saunders noticed nothing, absorbed in going over the heads of the sermon, but Mary M'Quhirr heard a long, low sigh at her elbow, and turned to find that Nelly Anderson's head had fallen on her shoulder, and that her face and hands were of a papery whiteness.

"The puir lass!" exclaimed Mary, with caressing compassion. "The drive has been ower muckle for her; I telled her this mornin' she wad hae been better to hae bided at hame. Saunders, man, can ye no' stop a wee, an' get some water?"

But Saunders drove on all the faster to the next trickle of water that fell from the hillside. In that countryside you could hardly get away from the sound of running water, save on the open moorland, where the water slept in the still black wimp-

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lings of the peat-burns. Then he dismounted with the quick turn of one accustomed to getting off a cart, and, running to the spout of clear gray water that shone cool against the greenery, he filled his open hands with the plashing water, putting the outsides of the palms together to form a cup, or rather a basin—for the hands of the Master of Drumquhat were large like the hand of fate, and his "gowpenfu'" held the better part of a pint.

"Let it dreep, Saunders," said his wife; "dinna spoil her goun!"

Had Mrs. M'Quhirr been condemned to the block she would have put on her best gown, and so arranged it that it would not have been spoiled; but, of course, she was an unusual woman.

So Saunders obediently let the water drip over the white face, and on the perfectly formed lips from which the color had faded. Walter, after a pause of wonderment, had resolved himself into a water supply, and was bringing more in his cap. After a little the water, the fanning and chafing did their work. Nelly Anderson revived and sat up, glancing somewhat fearfully around.

As she looked along the empty road, she seemed to see round the curve and over the brae, as though conscious that some one was pursuing her. Mary, her motherly heart turned to this woman whose future seemed as clouded as her past had been mysterious, watched the direction of her eyes, while continuing to pet her as though she had been that baby daughter who had hardly breathed on the earth, yet whom she still loved with a subtle, silent, interior love.

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"Hush, ye, my doo," she said; "naebody shall touch thee as lang as Saunders M'Quhirr an' his five sons are in Drumquhat!"

And Wattie shouldered a dangerous-looking cudgel plucked out of the hedge, and marched proudly along. He sidled round to his mother's part of the cart. She lay propped on Mary M'Quhirr's strong arm.

"Ye're no' feared noo, mither?" he said.

But in Nelly Anderson's heart there was a cold presentiment of evil. The serpent had found her out, come into her paradise. In delivering her from one peril Felix had brought upon her one which seemed infinitely greater. It menaced her boy, the other only touched herself.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE COMING OF THE SNOW.

Day after day passed quietly at Drumquhat, and as one week drew itself into another, Nelly Anderson gradually forgot the terror of that day. The coldness of her fear resolved itself into trembling doubt whether she could have seen aright. It might well have been only part of her hallucination, and the strange man at the bridge only some ordinary tourist, who had seemed to her the embodiment of the evil spirit of her clouded and tempestuous past, which had so lately been so wonderfully

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brought back to her. She comforted herself with the thought, and she watched her boy as he grew up like a young fir, so rapidly that in a few months he reduced his kilts to mere frillings. So, for very mensefulness, she had to take counsel with Mary M'Quhirr, and put him into knickerbockers, which she cut with a French grace and style which were thought uncanny among the hill folk. Ever since she had found her friend of old days, Felix Durand, he had paid her over regularly a considerable sum, telling her that it was her very own, and that the weight of his trust had been a burden on his mind for many years.

And, indeed, she never thought of questioning anything that Father Felix did for her. She obeyed him with that unquestioning obedience that seemed his due from every one about him. When the first hundred pounds came, she took it with tears in her eyes to Saunders, and asked him to take it from her, not to pay him for his great kindness, but to make her happy. Saunders stood dumfoundered. Had one of his horses come to him with a hundred-pound note to thank him for stable-room, he would not have been more astonished.

"My lass," he said, "ye maunna do this. The mistress an' me are no' ill aff, an' we hae made ye juist yin o' oor ain."

"Then let me be one of your very own, and let this help to pay the rent," said she, and she laid a white, petitionary hand on his arm.

Saunders stood in doubt, his grey eyes flashing a watery fire under his bushy eyebrow shocks. At last he said:

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"Ay, Nelly, my lass, I'll tak' the siller, an' it'll e'en help to pay the rent."

But Saunders put it in M'Clymont's bank in Cairn Edward on deposit receipt in the name of Ellen Anderson, and as each installment was handed to him he took it on the following Monday.

"Send the notices to me," said he to the banker, a man wisest of all that county in council, the generous and unpaid repository of a thousand secrets, whose heart was like a fountain, but whose unruly member was in perfect control.

Mr. M'Clymont sat sideways on his chair in his little office, under the row of Edinburgh almanacs that had heard so many stories, sad and glad, and his hands were folded placidly before him, only the thumbs ran round and round after each other as though they were running a race. He knew Saunders through and through, for he was a fellow-elder in the Cameronian kirk up on the hill; also, he knew the soundness of Saunders' finance, having made his little investments for him.

"That's not quite regular," he said, with a smile, "but I think we can manage it."

So henceforth the notices and receipts came enclosed in Saunders' own, and it rested with Saunders to open them, which with no compunction he did, and filed them away in the corner of the old wooden desk in which his precious things were kept. It was a carefully secured safe. Saunders carefully locked it every time he shut it, and the fact that it opened quite freely from the back was nothing to him. It had not had a hinge for some twenty years—indeed, never since the winter when

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Aleck had the measles and had been given the desk to play with. That young man had removed the hinges with the assistance of the poker. But it was quite as safe as it sat on the top of the drawers' head as though it had been in Mr. M'Clymont's strong room in Cairn Edward. The session records lay on the top of it. When Saunders consulted Mary her rapidity of "uptak" was astonishing, and we know what was her familiarity with the session records in the case of Janet Adair.

The winter snow was long in coming that year in Drumquhat. The banks of dark gray clouds had showed several times over the moors, and the long, bleak ridge of Ben Gairn had been white for a month; but now, in the middle of January, came the first big fall. It began just as the short daylight was fading away. The flakes fell slow and silent. There was no wind at first, and each flake settled upon the last like a curled feather, some of them as broad as the palm of Wattie's hand. He and Yarrow had a great time. Together with Donald, his belligerent black "pet lamb," lamb no longer, Wattie and his dog had been holding the highest of carnivals. Donald had been a "sucklie." Mary M'Quhirr had begun to feed him on the coffee-pot with the muslin over the "stroop," and had made a great sheep of him. But he was slow to develop the gravity of his years and race. He was not gentle, he was anything but meek, and his activity was astonishing. An English cousin of Mary, who came once to Drumquhat for a day, and saw Donald climb a bare rock and a six feet wall apparently without the slightest effort, refused to believe that

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the creature was a sheep at all; and, indeed, Donald had small kin to the equable Southdowns. He did not associate with other sheep at all. He never even spoke to them, and if he had to go away from the farmyard he went with the cows; and not one of them, or even the short-legged hornless bull, dare say a cross word to Donald, who would instantly draw off to the side, and, charging in unexpectedly from flank or rear, with a dour head down among their legs, would bring the mighty down in a heap in a moment, which was a very surprising thing to the dull bovine capacity, though familiar enough to Donald. But Donald did not go out much with the cows. He hid till they were gone, for loafing about the farm was much more in his line.

The game at which Wattie and his two friends played was a very simple one. It was excellent exercise for a snowy night. Wattie stood on a little hump of rock (which has always seemed to him to be at least ten feet high, till he went back this year and found it barely three), and, steadying himself with outstretched legs, he waited Donald's charge. That admirable animal entered thoroughly into the spirit of the game, and came behind him like a battering ram, first propelling Wattie into the air, and then sending him sprawling into the snow. Thereafter Donald fled in pretended terror, with the dog Yarrow on his track, soon to be caught and overturned, with the dog's muzzle harmlessly filled with his wool. Sometimes there would be a grand triangular combat, and all three would arise from the snow dusty as the miller. Walter used both indifferently for riding horses for somewhat brief peri-

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ods. The dog had one way of getting rid of his rider, the sheep another. Yarrow simply sat down, and Walter slid backwards upon the snow. Donald, on the other hand, put down his nose and elevated his hind quarters. Both methods were equally effective, but Donald would proceed to pound the fallen rider with his fore feet. This Wattie considered scoundrelly and unfair. It was on one of these occasions that he told Donald that he would make very good mutton, a remark for which he had afterwards to apologize.

CHAPTER XXII.

EARNING A SIXPENCE.

WALTER had his hands full that night. It was the first snow since he had been promoted to breeks. Kilts are unkindly wear in winter time for young legs, and discourage rolling in the snow. But with the enlarged possibilities of hodden grey knickers and roundabout so thick that with a little trouble and propping they would stand beside the bed by themselves when their tenant had gone to the breekless land, Wattie felt that life was a new thing. At six o'clock he was distinctly cheeky to his friend Aleck, to whom the mischief of a great-boned country lad was natural as capers to a young horse. In the house he lived a life of some repression, though Saunders was far too kind knowingly to discourage

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anything that was harmless. He smiled on any decent neighbor lads who came about the farm town in the gloamings, and he had even a canny blind eye when his eldest went off to see the lasses at the neighboring steading of Nether Nuik. Nether Nuik was plentifully stocked with daughters, and Aleck sometimes slipped over there to the grief of his mother—for mothers see things differently when it is their own sons who go a-courting.

"Hoot, Mary," said her husband, with a look of the old time in his eye, "what for div ye mourn aboot the lad gangin' ower by for a quiet blink? Ye ken it was i' the gloamin' that ye cam' to the loanin' yett at the Shirmers. Dinna flyte on the laddie; ye ken it'll do nae guid, an' the lad's a guid lad an' aye hame in time to supper the horse." (They use the cavalry plural in Galloway).

But this is a subject trying to the most wise mother, and Mary M'Quhirr could not see the matter in this light.

"Saun'ers M'Whurr, I wunner to hear ye, an' you an elder in the kirk, uphaudin' thae heverals o' Chrystie lasses—ay' an' evenin' them to yer ain mairriet wife. The last time that I was up at the Nuik, I declare if they werena milkin' the kye in their black gouns', the tawpies, an' a silly gomeral haudin' ilka coo's tail! Did ye ever see me milkin' the kye in my bettermous goun, or letting a great sumph o' a calf haud his minnie's tail to keep it oot o' my een? Na, Saunders, ye kenned better than to come to the byre when it was me that was milkin'—"

"Weel," interjected Saunders, quietly, "but

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aiblins I hae gotten a bit glisk o' ye frae the door cheek, an' as far as I can mind ye didna look across yer nose at me aither!"

"An' gin ye did, Saunders, ye saw me with the coo's tail atween my knee an' the pail like a decent wumman!"

Saunders tried again. There was a twinkle in his eye this time.

"Hoo was't, then, Mary, that the twa luggies was spilled at the corner o' the byre when ye were carryin' them to the milk-hoose—ay, an' that within ten yairds o' the back o' yer faither's decent blue coat wi' the brass buttons on it?"

The mistress of Drumquhat was overcome. Saunders had made her smile, and the day was his own.

"Juist because it was the *back* o' my faither's coat, I suppose," said Mary, with a girlish look of reminiscent shyness coming into her douce, matronly face.

There are chords which may be long silent in a woman's heart, but which, when rightly touched, carry her back to her girlhood. All good women remain girls till the day of their death. Now, Saunders was a very wise man, and he said never a word more, but instead he placed his large hand on his wife's shoulder and gave it a quiet and satisfied clap. Mary looked round in terror lest any one should have witnessed the unseemly familiarity. Had another man done the same it would not have put her nearly so much about. Only, that man's ear would have sung for a day or two. It was of Mary M'Quhirr that this tale was told in that

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countryside: A tramp who had watched all the household away to the fields, he himself lurking in the lee of a hayrick, entered one morning the kitchen where she was baking, and demanded ransom, with threats of dire intent. Mary M'Quhirr lifted up her voice, and to the would-be ruffian she said:

"Man, did onybody see ye come in?"

"No," said the tramp, anxious to prove that for her there was no hope of rescue; "no a body saw me come in."

"That's weel," Mary answered, no ways abashed, "for naebody will see ye gang oot! Lassie, reek (reach) me the axe!"

But when the weapon of death was reached, and the mistress marched to the door with it over her shoulder, the very faint-hearted robber was making the best of time toward the flowers of the moorland. It was not the least bitter drop in his cup that he was pursued as he ran by peals of inextinguishable laughter. Mary was not a frequent laugher, but when she did laugh the neighborhood heard, and came to inquire the joke. Then she laid aside the axe, and went about her work, and had almost forgotten the circumstance when the men from the field came in to ask at "lowsin" time what the fun had been.

It was shortly after her interview with Saunders that Wattie was brought in and admonished. Mary had perforce to show a little sternness to somebody to make up for her recent soft-heartedness to her husband; but Wattie was in no wise intimidated. With an eye to further ploys he took his porridge with most hypocritical gravity, planning how he

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would get out for another grand run in the snow before he went to bed. His wish was gratified in this wise. The snow was coming down a steady cover, and when it was a couple of feet deep on the open, the swirl of the wind had driven it into the angle of the yard, till over a wide area it lay as deep as the height of a man. Through these wreaths the "boys" were opening roads. With their great, wide-mouthed shovels they laid themselves into their work—not working any the less well that they were occasionally under the eyes of Walter's mother, who came to the door now and then to see how they were getting on. None of them looked upon her as other than a goddess, and in a distant kind of a way they had all been in love with her in their time. They had never told her, or so much as owned it to themselves; but there came a time in the history of each one when they began to take stock of ribbon and belt, and the set of Nelly Anderson's rippling hair. They were eager to make the least message that might take them into the "room." And the experience did them good, and broke them in. Nelly was not wholly unconscious, for all women know these things; and she made them fetch and carry for her. Though they slouched like louts when she took them in hand, they were well set up and strapping fellows before they graduated, and went off on errands of their own in the forenicht to the Nether Nuik and the other farm towns. Generally it was the other ones, for on going to the Nuik one evening, James and Rab, two younger sons, who generally hunted as a couple, found as they looked shyly

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round the corner of the byre door their brother Aleck in possession of the dun cow's tail. They could not see which of the Chrystie lasses it was that was milking, and they never knew, for their brother dismissed them with one biting word of scorn.

He looked at them a moment, and, as they shrunk from his eye, he uttered this withering word :

"*Followdick !*"

What the apocalyptic mystery of this bitter taunt may be, the historian is unable to say ; but it was certainly effective, for the youths vanished into the dark, and in the meanest and meekest way trickled round the corner, and so out into the waste of whiteness underfoot and blackness above. Aleck never referred to the matter, and next day James and Rab tried to persuade themselves that it had never happened.

So it was with some goodwill that these lads opened their shoulders and threw their white spadefuls higher than their heads when the bright glow of the lamp and fireside gushed warm upon the snow, and Nelly and Wattie came out to tread for a few moments the dainty white arcades. Nelly had a shawl about her head and shoulders, and Aleck vaguely wondered why Nancy up at the Nuik could not wear a shawl like that. He supposed that the folks wore them in that way in France. On the other hand, nobody had ever come to take Nancy Chrystie away, and in his slow-thinking, country way he was glad. But when Nelly had gone her way to the stable door, and be-

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fore she had come lightly stepping back, he had the grace to be ashamed of his thoughts.

When his mother went in, Wattie slipped aside and did not follow her. He went into the cart shed and put his fingers into his ears lest he should hear her call him. Had he heard he would have gone, for he had a great idea of obedience.

The "boys" were in gamesome humor, Aleck especially. He was thinking of a good thing that he came near saying to Nancy Chrystie, and he slapped his thigh and would have guffawed on the strength of it. Indeed, he opened his mouth for the purpose; but his brother Rab, who was the wag of the family, having a neat snowball in his hand, popped it in as accurately as he would have dropped a ball of worset into a bonnet when at school the caps were arrayed for the game royal of "Bonnet-ba." Aleck, after a gasp or two, gave chase, and there was a battle in which snow was pushed into various uncomfortable places, mainly down each other's backs and sleeves. After they had settled this little matter, it came into Rab's head to say to Wattie:

"Wattie, I'll gie ye a saxpance if ye'll gang frae the hoose-door by yersel', across the yaird through the barn, an' shut the back barn door."

"Let the boy alane!" said Aleck; "ye ken what my mither'll say."

But Rab was excited with his tussle, and full of mischief as he could be.

"Ay, he's feared, nae doot!" said Rab, knowing that this was the way to make Wattie quite determined.

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"Ay, but I daur!" said Wattie; "whaur's yer sixpence, Rab?"

Wattie could not take Rab's financial position on trust. He had been cheated too often.

"Oh," returned Rab, affronted at the implied doubt, "ye'll get yer sixpence!"

"Doon wi't then," said Wattie, practically.

Rab reluctantly searched in the depths of his "hook-book," getting as near as possible to the blindless window through which the lamp was shining in order to see more clearly, and somewhat reluctantly passed over a coin to Alec, whose integrity made him always stake-holder.

"Dinna gie me half a sovereign, Rab!" cried Jamie from the milk-hoose, with bitter irony. Jamie was fond of cream.

"Come oot o' the milk-bine, or I'll tell my mither!" retorted Rab, and all the three young men passed into the outer lobby, leaving Walter alone outside to prove the manhood of his breeks by his quest perilous. As Aleck passed him, he forced a stout cudgel into his hand, and whispered:

"Gin ye see onything, hit it!"

This was hardly reassuring, but Wattie gripped his rung, and took his way across the yard. He thought of going back and opening the door. He would have given far more than the sixpence for a ray of light from the open doorway; but he knew that this would be looked upon as a proof of cowardice, and he strode manfully onward. The snow had ceased falling, and the sky was glittering with keen frost. The cold entered into his marrow, and the stillness made him shiver. He heard the cattle

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champing their food and rattling the iron of their chains in their stalls, and he felt befriended. He went onward with new courage. He reached the great barn-door, which gaped upon him like the great, black mouth of a sepulchre. His heart came quick and faint, and there was a curious constriction about his throat. But he manfully entered, and, standing an awful listening moment before venturing further, he heard the "rattens" rustling among the straw. Otherwise the stillness was absolute. He felt a thousand miles away from any one, and it did not seem to him that he could even be the same boy who had played with Donald on the rocks in the gloaming.

He stooped and felt the edge of the door at the further side. He was looking into a sort of small stackyard, and between the corn stacks which rose imminent over him the stars were glimmering cold and blue. His nearest friend seemed to live in one of these—so lonely did the boy feel in spite of his breeks. The door was barred, and well barred too, for he determined to have no doubt about his right to that sixpence. He turned and took one step towards the great gray gulf of the main door. The blood of all his little body surged to his head, and his heart stopped. *There was Something in the doorway*—something that had dull, gleaming eyes and horns—something that crawled on the ground, and turned its horrid, shapeless head from side to side with a low, moaning noise. For an awesome moment Wattie stood without power to move, and then, thinking that the time of his death had come, amid a whirl of other things, Aleck's advice stood

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suddenly clear, and he resolved to strike one last good stroke. So, clutching his short blackthorn in both hands, he struck the moving, moaning horror fair between its glazy eyes of death, and, leaping over it, he fled with shriek on shriek for the door. As it was opened, the boy sank fainting on the door-step. An agitated throng stood round him, and some one stooping over took up the slight form of the hero. Then the tall form of the master of Drum-quhat filled up the doorway.

"Gin this is ony o' your loon's tricks," he said, "I'll break every bone in your bodies!"

Rab slept that night in the barn, with a lump on his forehead as large as the ball of his thumb. He had wrapped the skin of a bullock killed that day about him, and had crawled in the dark of the wall to intercept the boy as he came out. He had not meant any harm, though he had thoughtlessly done what might have endangered the child's reason. He heard his father's words, and recognized that, cold night though it was, the barn would be the most comfortable sleeping-place that night for him. He watched the group in the kitchen as Wattie "came to," and after seeing him so far recover as to demand the sixpence from Aleck, he might have ventured to dare his father's hazel stick, but he could not face Nelly Anderson's eyes. So he went back to the barn.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT RAB FOUND IN THE BARN.

ROBERT M'QUHIRR, the youngest of the five sons of the farmtown of Drumquhat, was no coward. The family did not breed them. The blood of Drumclog and Bothwell Brig was yet no ways degenerate. Since Clavers had ridden over them in vain, two more centuries of that stern gray land and the hardy arbitrament of farm work on unkindly soil had weeded out the over-tender plants. So Rab had no intention of being easily "fleyed" (frightened). He had slept in the barn before—for his health—but he generally avoided that necessity in winter-time as far as he could. He was what is known as a "steerin' loon," and more than occasionally he had to learn the tonic qualities of "hazel oil." Life was paternal in the Galloway uplands, and many a son took a thrashing from his father after he was "man-muckle" and thought himself all the better for it. Of course Rab preferred to do without it—if he could—but he bore no ill-will to his father in any case. It was his father's duty (for which he had to answer to the minister) to discipline his family. It was his own to keep a whole skin On both sides it was without prejudice, as the lawyers say. So he proceeded to make himself comfortable in the barn on the top of the corn-mow as best he could. He wished that he had been small enough to creep through the triangular wicket

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into that excavated cave at the back of the mow which Wattie had diligently made for himself; but no one could get through the wickets except Walter, so he had to content himself with the bed temporarily made in the mow. His mother came to the house door two or three times, and called "Rab!" He would have liked to come out at her call, for the barn was getting a little bit eerie, and he did not even like the thought of the dead bullock's horns and hide lying outside the barn door, where he had thrown them. He heard Aleck speaking to his mother from within the house, and he knew that she was being reassured that he was perfectly safe, and told that when he was tired of stopping out—why, then, he would come in! Aleck was a believer in *laissez faire*. Rab knew that the outer door would not be locked that night, and that his mother would sleep with one ear set towards the click of its latch.

Rab went to the stable and fetched a comfortable rug, in which he wrapped himself, and, inserting his long body into a pit dug diagonally in the mow, he drew a corn sack or two about him, and made all taut. There was nothing alarming about sleeping in the barn to a lad of his inches and experience. Rats he held in contempt, and their constant rustling among the sheaves and their squeaking scuffles on the floor of the barn only soothed him to sleep. Rats had been everywhere about the farm since ever Rab could remember, and he minded them no more than flies. The upper half of the barn door he left open, though the chill frosty air came in—partly that the darkness might not be so oppressive,

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and partly that he might be able to see along the narrow arcade through the snow which he had helped to make through the snow drift to the front door. When he lay down first his feet had been cold and his brain hot. In a little, as his feet warmed and the cold air cooled his brain, he became drowsier, till the stars began to waver and sway from side to side as if he had been seeing their reflection in rippling water. Rab cleared his eyes a time or two, said his prayers, and dived into a dark-blue sea of sleep, deep as the midnight sky above him.

How long he slept he could not tell, but all of a sudden he came wide awake with a suppressed gasp, and a feeling that something had taken him by the throat. For a moment he could not remember what he was doing in the barn, and he was about to call out, thinking it must be Aleck or his mother come to seek him, when the sense of something mysterious struck him silent. He glanced at the stars, striving with the craft of the intelligent shepherd to get some idea of what time it was from God's great illuminated clock. This art is mostly lost now in Galloway. The Waterbury watch has killed it, but thirty years ago it was not uncommon. But what Rab saw made him forget the stars. The lower half of the great barn door was now open, and just outside the threshold, on the narrow snow-covered pavement of rough cobble stones, lay something black, which had a rough resemblance to the shape of a man lying prone on his face. Rab's heart stilled within him as another consciousness grew to certainty. *There was some one else in the barn—*

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man or thing—something that moves stealthily, breathlessly, that shuffled its feet, and groped and groped in the dark. Rab's blood congealed. This was worse than his father's stick. It was terrible to be groped for in the dark by something blind, silent, pitiless. Rab tried to make a break for it to the door, but even as he did so the thing crossed the modified darkness of the great square door, for a moment shutting off the rats. The lad's muscles became like water, and he had that sense of utter powerlessness in the face of imminent danger which comes to young nerves in their first real peril, but to older men oftenest in some nightmare of the small hours. Gradually he awoke to the consciousness that the sightless groping was exclusively along the walls and on the floor. Rab could hear it brush the corn mow. That made a sharp, momentary sound, but he could hear the feet of the unknown pause at each new object on the floor. The bushel which always stood tumbled on its edge against the wall half way along came down scraping the unplastered stones with a harsh, grating noise. Then there was silence absolute for a minute. Rab was sure that he did not breathe, and he wished that he could stop his heart also. Its noise seemed in that still place like the thumping of a mill-wheel, when the mill-lade is running free.

Soon the groping recommenced, but it was now in the far corner of the barn, where stood the old turnip-cutter between the shafts of the unused tax-cart. Suddenly from that corner came the sharp blue spurt of a match being struck, and Rab had only time to withdraw his head into his corn sacks,

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when the tiny jet of light seemed to fill the barn to bursting with illumination. Rab could, however, see out of his hay cavern, though imperfectly and with difficulty, a tall man standing in the corner of the barn shading the match with his hand. He could not see his face, which was hidden beneath the downward bend of a great black hat, but he noticed that one arm lay very close to his side, and that the man's whole body had a sharp twist to the left. It was Rab's first intention, whenever he realized that the intruder was a man, to jump out and ask him what he was doing in his father's barn, but the stranger's movements fascinated him. In the wicket at which the man was standing there was the butt of one of his mother's farthing dips, which was used to give light to the threshing floor on the dark mornings when the boys rose to the flail at five o'clock. Before the match burned out the stranger touched the candle with it, and induced first a feeble splutter and then a faint peep of light. The wick just caught, but threatened every moment to go out. The man drew from the pocket of his long coat something which Rab had never seen before, but which he instinctively knew to be a revolver. Rab had one or two books that his father knew nothing about. One of them was by a man named Mayne Reid, and was so interesting that Rab knew that it must be a very wicked book. This was how Rab discriminated literary good and evil. A good book was a book that you did not want to read, a bad book was one that you read in spite of yourself—a rule easy to be remembered.

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So he knew a revolver when he saw one. Revolvers are not mentioned in good books.

The revolver of the novel of those days was a deadly weapon—more comprehensive than the Nordenfeldt gun of modern times—stopping a simultaneous charge of fifty Indians from all points of the compass ; more accurate than the rule of three, for Rab remembered about cutting the bonds of the maiden bound to the stake (at fifty paces, was it ?). He was therefore quiet, but his superstitious terrors had vanished. Rab had thought of emigrating so as to possess a revolver, but this was better. He would show them that he was not a boy. They were all in their beds sleeping, and he, the youngest, was in the deadly imminent breach. A moment afterward he wished he had been anywhere else. The man took a step in his direction, and Rab gave himself up for lost. But the man, as the candle flickered out, stooped and picked up a double twist of plow-rope from the hard-beaten earthen floor of the barn. Then he went to the door and looked out. The dark object was still lying motionless in the snow. The man stooped and threw it about his shoulders in the form of a cloak. Without pausing to shut the door of the barn, he went silently towards the dwelling house of Drumquhat, which could be seen silhouetted against the glimmering snow. Rab was out of his hole in a moment, and at the door. The man went straight to the window of the room where Walter's mother slept. Rab knew that Wattie was sleeping that night with her, probably on the strength of the fright he had got, for he had seen the double

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shadow on the blind before he went to sleep. As the man turned the corner of the cart-shed Rab slipped out of the back door of the barn, and was round behind the corner of the little fir plantation under whose shadow the snow lay sparsely. He had hardly got himself hidden before the tall figure came round the corner, and paused a moment before going up to Nelly Anderson's window. Rab had time to wonder where the dogs were that they made no sign, then he remembered that they would be in the kitchen, quite at the other end of the long, low, rambling house—a part of the house entered by an entirely different door—and that the snow deadened every footstep. The man approached the window, laid the rope, which was over his left arm, on the snow, inserted something under the sill of the window, which instantly gave noiselessly upwards half its height, and prepared to make his way through the opening thus made. But at this moment Rab, knowing that the time had come for him to do something, stepped lightly from his covert, and, just as the man put his head within the room, the lad's two heavy hands were laid on his shoulders, and he was dragged back into the snow. There was a deadly conflict, waged with short gasps, but otherwise in silence. The adversary was the stronger man, but Rab was no mean foe. His grasp upon the throat of his antagonist, in spite of his struggles, was not to be shaken off, and it was with a feeling of triumph that Rab felt his efforts slacken. The thought that victory was within his grasp ran like wine through his veins. They would not call him "the wean" any more—those who lay

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in bed like logs while he, Rab, was defending the house ; and, above all, what would Nelly Anderson say ?

Alas ! just then something sweet and clammy was dashed in his face, a million lights ran round him in a ring, his grasp relaxed, and he fell back with a sigh on the snow. At that moment there came from the other side of the house the sound of a door being opened. The man hastily gathered his cloak, and stepped into the darkness of the little plantation which sheltered the farm on three sides. He glided stooping under the horizontal boughs, and followed it all the way till at the north end he struck down the loaning and vanished.

A light snow was just beginning to fall, and the sky was overcasting. A solemn wrack of clouds was drifting up from the south, and the snow-haze that drove before them wiped the sky of stars as a boy wipes his slate. As the man vanished a shawl-wrapped figure came round the house. It was Mary M'Quhirr looking for her youngest son. She had been at the barn, but had found there only silence and emptiness. Her eyes caught the dark object lying at the " doon-the-house " window, and she went quickly forward. It was her own Rab lying on his face in the snow, beside him a coil of rope, and the frame of Nelly Anderson's window open. It said much for Mary M'Quhirr's belief in her training of her children that no thought of evil came into her mind. Neither did a doubt of Nelly Anderson cross her mind. She had been wondrously reassured during the last six months about that young woman, and that too by events whose

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bearing might have seemed to be all the other way ; but happily she was a woman, and therefore illogical. God pity us men if women were not so ! Mary listened at the window ; she heard the two breathings from the darkness where the bed was—one long and slow, the other quicker, ever falling out of step, as it were, and then again making up. She softly drew the window down, and stood a moment to think how she could get the boy in. Assured that he was breathing, she wrapped her shawl about his head and shoulders, and ran into the house. In a minute she came out with her husband. Saunders without comment took his son in his arms, and carried him into the kitchen, where he laid him on his own plaid on the warm hearthstone. The boy would not waken, and after exhausting all the ordinary means known to their simple pharmacœpia, the father and mother sat down beside their boy, saying no word, but each chafing a hand, till the gray light of morning began to come, and the lad looked up, bewildered. After a few minutes Saunders asked with a stern tenderness what was the meaning of all this. Rab grew bit by bit into the sense of his heroship, and told the story as connectedly as he could. It was the bitterest disappointment to him that his father evidently did not believe one word of the tale. Saunders thought that the boy had been walking in his sleep and had dreamed the rest. He told Rab, in a way not to be mistaken, to say nothing about it, but to go quietly upstairs to his bed. Mary M'Quhirr was not so sure. She had seen the open window, and she did not think that the true-hearted Rab could either have been de-

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ceived or have deceived her. She went out as soon as it was daylight to the barn. She found easily enough Rab's hole from which he had risen, with the corn sacks pulled out on the floor. She also found in the corner the candle burned to the guttered butt, and on the hard earth in the corner a match of a kind not seen in Galloway. Then she took a complete tour of the farm-steading, looking for footsteps; but the later snow had covered all, and even in the little wood, though there was less snow than in the open, there was enough to confuse Rab's footmarks with those of any other who might have been there also. Altogether she felt that she had not enough evidence to go before the jury, and so she said nothing to her husband. Neither said Saunders another word to her, but she knew instinctively that she was not to speak of the matter. Snell and sharp-tongued as Mary M'Quhirr was, she yielded loyally in all great matters to the silent, great-hearted man who was her husband.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MORNING AFTER.

It was a strange dawning at Drumquhat. The father and mother had not thought it worth their while to go to bed. Saunders had gone out to fodder the beasts, and finding after having done so that he had still time on his hands, he went into the

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stable to attend to the "horse." There were three of them, and Brown Jess, who was Aleck's favorite, looked over her shoulder as he entered for the lump of sugar which that youth was wont to steal from his mother's sugar bowl for his sweet-mouthed friend. Finding, however, that her groom was not Aleck, and that there was no lump of sugar for her, she jibbed and stood obstinately sideways in the stall, attempting at the same time to give her placid neighbor, "Mary Gray," a sly kick as if she were responsible for her disappointment. But Jess received from Saunders so solid a slap upon her flank and so emphatic a swing round that she instantly became aware of herself and alive to the necessity of sobermindedness. She was an elder's horse, and her skittish tricks must be reserved for a scampish young rapscallion who went over in the evenings to hold the tail of Nether Neuk's kye. Soon Aleck came in at the stable door yawning and stretching himself, complaining in an undertone that it was a cold morning for a fellow to get up so early. There never was a more astonished youth than he when his father met him face to face, and saluted him with:

"This is a bonny like time to be comin crawlin' oot o' yer bed, man. Mair like ye gin ye stayed mair at hame at nicht. Ye wad be mair gleg at risin' i' the mornin', I'm thinkin'!

"'Tis the voice of the sluggard, I hear him complain,
You have waked me too soon, I must slumber again.'"

Aleck had heard of this gentleman before more than once, but he had too much respect for his

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father's morning temper to say so. He resolved to give his parent a wide berth till after breakfast. He went somewhat ostentatiously to the cobwebby window-sill, where the curry combs were laid.

"Yer wark's a' dune," said his father, grimly; "ye can gae ben the hoose an' coont yer neck-ties."

This was a taunt exceeding bitter, for Aleck was developing a taste in neckcloths not counted becoming in the son of a Cameronian elder. A fine emerald green he found most effective at close quarters—say, on a fornicht when the lads and lasses were gathered round the cheery ingle of Nether Neuk. He had acquired this particular tie about the same time that Nance Chrystie got a particular neck ribbon which was known among the gamesome callants as "Nance's Donnybrook tether." He had been much teased about the matter among the lasses, and liked it so well that he would put it on of an evening in the stable, and walk four miles just to hear about it. It was this fact that made his mother think that there was something in it. Then Aleck had also a fine Turkey red tie with blue diamonds on it, deadly up to fifty paces—a tie so brilliant that it gave one sunspots in the eyes to look at it long. This was most useful in the darkened byre, when Nance laid her cheek on Crumbie's rough hide, and looked at him with one of those glances which made his veins run something of the nature of molten metal, while he stood solemnly plaiting Crumbie's tail, and wondering what there was about the lass to make him go hot and cold like that. So his father's taunt made his cheek flame as

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though the slow winter's sun were already rising untimely.

Aleck murmured that he would go and see that the sheep were all safe, and without further word from his father he turned the corner of the house, and was still more astonished to see his mother walking a few steps, then bending down, as if looking for something she had lost, in the corner of the little plantation. Aleck loved his mother, and if she had any favorites among her sons, Aleck, in spite of the matter of Nether Neuk, was that one. He went over to his mother, and said:

"What are ye seekin' there?"

Mary M'Quhirr started up as though detected in something disgraceful.

"Seekin'? What wad I be seekin'? I'm nae nicht-hawk. I'm up betimes in the mornin' an' at my wark. Ye hae been attendin' to yours nae doot. Ye'll hae the 'horse' dune, an' the nowt foddered and the sheep lookit—an' noo ye'll be giein' a bit look roon' the steadin' to see gin ither fowk are a' at their wark? It's a graun thing to hae an eident lad aboot the place. Ay, it is that!"

Aleck stood aghast. What had come to all the folks since last night? A light broke on him.

"Has Rab no' come in?" he asked.

Rab slept in the other end of the garret from Aleck, and even if he had occupied the same sleeping-room Aleck usually dressed in the dark, minimizing trouble and the chance of being called to account for tardiness at the same time. His mother answered tartly:

"Rab's sleepin' in his ain bed, puir falla'; dinna

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ye be gaun clamperin' in wi' yer muckle tackety boots. Gang an' see gin there's nocht that ye can turn yer haun to !"

This was still more unexpected. Rab in bed, his father not to be spoken to, and his mother snapping his head off and in the same breath calling the offender of the night before "Puir falla' !" It passed comprehension.

"Weel," thought Aleck to himself, "they needna a' knock me doon an' kick me for fa'in'."

But he did not say so—only turned and walked away without a word, well aware that in a little his mother's heart would smite her for her injustice, and counting on quite a number of indulgences in consequence. Aleck had some of the elements of diplomacy. As he walked sedately away, his conclusion was that his father had gone out after all, given Rob his promised thrashing, and that his mother had "cast oot" with his father on that account. This was his interpretation of the whole state of the case. He was at once satisfied and contemptuous.

"A most michty fuss to mak' aboot a lickin' !" he said, with some indignation.

He would remonstrate with Rab.

Morning had now broken fully, and the winter sun was rising over the ridge of Ben Gairn far to the south when Wattie came to the door. He wanted to go with Aleck to feed the turnip sheep. He liked to turn the handle, and hear the turnips go "craunch, craunch" in the filler, and watch the crisp finger-lengths of white turnip fall into the trough. So having secured his friend Aleck's

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goodwill by his obvious good temper (a rare thing that morning, Aleck thought) the two marched off to the turnip pits. It was cold work clearing the snow from the long-backed, turf-covered mounds, where the Swedes lay sleeping safe from the frost. Their fingers were tingling with cold before they had got the mouth of the pit clear, but they had not been working long before the blood came back with such vigor that Wattie thought that it was even worse than the cold. He did not make any complaint, for was not he going to be a Galloway herd, and tramp over the moors with two collies, knitting a stocking and smoking a pipe all at the same time, just like John Scott, the herd? He must, therefore, learn to be manly, so he worked in such a way as to deserve and receive the commendation of Aleck.

"Ye'll do!" said that worthy, emphatically, and his tone was equal to the Victoria Cross in Walter's estimation.

The sheep came shouldering and pushing along the troughs; some stood stolidly feeding at one place till all within their reach was exhausted. Others kept nosing their neighbors, drawing themselves out of the poverty-stricken localities, and driving themselves wedge-like into places which looked more promising. Donald, the pet, had come along to help. He did not think much of turnips, but he liked to pose among the other sheep of low degree as the Czar of all the turnip fields, owing equal sway over black-face and cross-bred. Donald was nothing if not pugnacious. He would put his stubborn head down, and, drawing

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himself off half a bowshot, charge blindly home, clearing a whole side at one swoop. He was the Rupert of the turnip trough.

On returning to the homestead they had breakfast together, Walter going "ben the hoose" to have it with his mother, Saunders, and Mary. The eyes of the master and mistress of Drumquhat met over the table with a glance of understanding and sympathy. Then they looked at the face of their house-sojourner with a look of great compassion. It was still and peaceful as a hill tarn. She knew nothing of the fearsome thing that had gone round the house and round the house, and which would have come within the house, but for the watchfulness of the despised Rab. Rab himself came down with a headache that was something to boast of; but then they did not boast of headaches at Drumquhat, or make invalid capital out of them. They were ashamed of them, so Rab said nothing about his. Only he occasionally felt his skull cautiously all over when no one was looking, to see if he could find any hole in it. He was not successful, so he went out to the yard and stuck it into a snow bank to cool it. This went much better. While he was doing so Aleck came out, and, seeing his brother in this most peculiar position, and remembering the snowball which Rab had put into his mouth the night before, he hastily compacted a dense globe of snow, and caused it to take effect on Rab's broad corduroys with the sound of a paper bag bursting at a soiree. Rab instantly withdrew his head in pain and anger. He had stood a good deal the night before, and he was not

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going to stand any more in the morning. He saw no one but Walter, who was laughing and chuckling at the far corner by the milk-house. Aleck had dropped flat into one of the deep snow passages. Rab was not to be baulked of his revenge on somebody, and without stopping to reflect that it was impossible for Walter to throw so well-considered a ball half that distance, he let fly a missile which took effect smartly on the child's cheek, and caused him to retire rapidly on his reserves in the milk-house where his "gran" was attending to the butter.

That good lady instantly came out, and seeing no one in sight, for Rab having dropped even as Aleck, she vented her anger on the empty air, and upon all within hearing, though out of sight, whom it might concern.

"Ye great big guid-for-naethin' sumphs, I'll get yer faither to ye wi' a stick. Hae ye naething better to dae than mak' the bit bairn greet wi' yer snawba's. Dinna think that I canna see ye—I see ye brawly, and gin ye dinna come oot I'll come efter ye mysel'. Think shame on yersels!"

Which Rab and Aleck did, for the position of lying prone in a snowbank is not one which makes for self-respect. Both these worthies endeavored to crawl carefully along the snow passages which they had excavated without letting their mother see them; and at the corner opposite the "swinehouse" they knocked their heads together, glared at each other, then promptly clinched and fought a good tussle in the snow, till a horse whip in the vigorous hands of their father was laid impartially about

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their ears. Saunders gave them a word or two for wasting their time ; but, not having heard what went before, he knew of nothing worse than a rough and tumble such as healthy country lads are always indulging in, which Saunders did not object to so long as they kept such little "ploys" out of his sight.

In a little while Aleck brought the now pacified Wattie round to the gable end of the barn and told him to creep through one of the wickets which led into his impregnable fortress behind the big corn mow. As soon as Wattie was safely there, Aleck handed him two balls made of somewhat slushy snow, with the pregnant advice :

"Noo, see ye dinna miss !"

Then stepping to the corner he called loudly, "Rab !"

Very unsuspecting, that youth came round the gable of the barn, and stood directly opposite Walter's wicket. There was a broad smile on his boyish face. His headache was gone, and he had got the better of his brother. He paused to enjoy the situation. There came a sound like an egg breaking, and the jovial countenance was distorted with quite other feelings. Rob was dancing round on the points of his toes, trying to excavate the wet snow out of his ear with his little finger, while Aleck and Wattie exhausted themselves with uproarious laughter.

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE CHRYSTIES OF NETHER NEUK.

NETHER NEUK was a much larger farm than Drumquhat, and sat on the bare crown of the moorland just where it began to break into cultivated fields and feather with birch and larch along the water-courses. There were other solid attractions about Nether Neuk besides its garland of fair daughters. It was a farm that kept three pair of horse, and as Nether Neuk was blessed as exclusively with daughters as Drumquhat with sons, there were consequently three "ploomen," all of whom took their meat in the kitchen, and two or three "oot-bye lasses," or girls who did the rough work of the byre and the fields. But the Nether Neuk daughters were no idlers. They were well kenned for clever-handed, *through-gaun* lasses. Their mother had died when they were young, and when they were quite woman grown their father had married his housekeeper, erst dairymaid, Clemmy Kilpatrick. She was not much older than the eldest of the girls, and was kept in a proper state of control by all of them. The four girls were Liza, Grace, Nance, and the "Hempy," who was a wild, coltish, tangle-haired girl of fifteen, who rode barebacked, and sometimes, it was whispered, astride. These four were as one against any common foe, though their internecine warfare was endless. Nance had but recently left off bare-back

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riding, scampering barefoot over the meadows, and generally carrying on like a wild thing. She was therefore both able and willing to rebuke the "Hempy." She had a fit of demureness at present which some benighted people mistook for shyness. But, as the Deeside guidwives said, shyness and Nance Chrystie might be wed, for they were naught akin. This was the opinion of the knowing ones, but such was *not* the opinion of Mr. Alexander M'Quhirr, Younger of Drumquhat, nor, indeed, of any of the young callants, whose readiness to hold the cow's tail in the byre and keep their sheep's eyes on the Nether Neuk pew was a scandal to all the douce neighbors.

Peter Chrystie of Nether Neuk was what is known as a "character." A keen hand at a bargain and a good attendant at the church, he was a noble pillar of the plate in a land dry and thirsty from scarcity of elders. He has been known to lean over the gathering coppers to his fellow-elder, with a face still and solemn like a hill-country communion, and say: "I'll tak' twunty-twa for thae yowes, an diel a farthing less!" His fellow-elder is our authority for this. The congregation thought that the two were in high spiritual communication. But for all that Hutton of Harbishaw bought the yowes. The price was twenty-two shillings. He thought it was a shilling too dear, so he told the story to be upsides with Peter of Nether Nuik. Peter, when he heard it, remarked that the story was an unqualified falsehood. This was the gist of his words. The verbatim report has happily not been preserved.

Peter had a herd named Rab An'erson. It is a

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common country name. "Are there any Christians here away?" asked of a herd laddie an itinerant preacher. "Na, na," was the instant reply, "we're a' An'ersons an' Douglases here!" Rab An'erson was at once the plague and the occupation of Peter Chrystie's life. He had dismissed him for a good-for-nothing time and time again. Whereupon Rab, no ways disconcerted, would lie in bed in his cot-house for a day or two, his ragged children and slatternly wife making furtive visits to the back-door of the farmhouse to bring away platefuls of provisions from the kindly hands of the second mistress of the house, Clemmy Kilpatrick, the ex-dairy-maid, who had worked alongside of her in the old days before Peter took her into the farmhouse to wash and dress his tow-headed lasses. About the third day Peter would come to the door of the cot, and without pausing to knock, force his way in; and with a stout hazel rung lay on heartily on the slumbering hulk of the giant in bed, accompanying the exercise with such excogitations as the following:

"Ye great muckle fushionless sumph (whack)! tak' that (whack, whack), lyin' in yer naked bed when ither fowk are daein' yer wark (thump). D'ye think I hae nocht better to do (whack) than come plowterin' efter you (whack, thump), ye thrawn-faced, lazy-baned haythen ye!" Peter here discovering that his blows have only been taking effect on a judiciously arranged pillow, shifts his hold upon his stick, and tries new ground. The first attempt is successful. "Ye menseless hound (whack, "Ow, ow!"), howkin' here in yer bed when the sheep are

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whammlin' in the moss-hags an' fa'in' oval by the score."

"Ow, ow, ow! maister, hae dune!"

"Hae dune wi' the like o' ye, Rab An'erson; I'se no' hae dune wi' ye till I hae braken ilka bane i' the muckle cauf's body o' ye!"

The scene ended some time after in the pacification of master and man, and this strange herd stayed on to be his master's daily labor. Some one asked Nance Chrystie if her father did much work now. She said that he did—he labored daily at Rab Anderson. There was no day in all the three hundred and sixty-five whereon Peter Chrystie's thin, cracked voice would not have been heard, going before him about the farm offices or over the moor, with an eldrich cry of "Saw ye ocht o' Rab An'erson, lazy taed? Saw ye ocht o' Rob An'erson, lazy taed?" Peter was a man who had the reputation of being both sly and pawky. He had one peculiarity which made him cordially detested by his farm servants. He had once had the peculiarities of a good field glass pointed out to him by a Cairn Edward watchmaker when he was in getting a new glass on his ancient domed verge watch. Peter at once saw its capacities in application to farm work where there are three ploughmen as well as many out-workers. For some time after its acquisition the farm hinds could not understand how it was that "the maister" was sure to come over the hill just when they were having a friendly "tove" with a game-watcher, or where "ca'in' the crack," with a neighbor lass passing along the footpath at the bottom of the field; or how it was that when they

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left their horses for a moment standing in the convenient hollow behind the dyke, and were just settled down to the refreshing draw at the "cutty," which had been lying ready charged in their waistcoat pocket since morning, "Peepin' Peter" should look over the dyke and threaten them with all manner of pains and penalties for their idleness. Peter was not popnlar among his neighbors on this same account, either. It is a strange and uncanny thing when at kirk and market your neighbor across the glen can give you more accurate and private information about the ongoings at your house than you possess yourself. It conveys a sense of having done wrong to the most innocent. Peter was far from being a popular character, except with Rab An'erson, his giant shepherd. Many a fight Rab had fought in defence of his master's good name when the callants gathered in the gloaming about the smiddy fire, or, later, on the green in front of the "Deeside Airms."

"I'll let nae man misca' my maister in my presence," Rab would say. "Guid kens, I'm nae professor, an' I haena come forrit for twenty year,* but I ken what's richt an' what's wrang, an' Peter Chrystie o' the Neuk has been a better maister to me than onybody has a richt to expec'!"

"Hoo aboot that last threshin' ye got, Rab?" the wag of the party would ask.

"Gin mair o' ye gat yer paiks afener, it wad be tellin' ye on the judgment day," answered Rab, pertinently. "Your maisters disna half do their bunden duty by ye."

* Partaken of the communion.

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"I wad like to see Nether Neuk or ony ither man lay a haun' on me," a sturdy young ploughman would say; "I wad thraw his neck like a corbie!"

"Gin ye did yer wark as I dinna do mine (more shame to me!) ye wad get neyther word nor daud at Nether Neuk. Na, 'licks for lazy banes,' that's my maister's owerword!"

"Did ye hear what he said to young Semple o' the Sypland?" said the smith, who was a privileged person whom even Rab An'erson with four glasses in him did not stop in his words. He had once tried, but the smith, with a hot iron in one hand held close to Rab's face, had knocked him over an anvil with the other, and then calmly gone on with his hammering—"Clink, clank, clinkum, clankum!" without deigning a glance as the prostrate giant picked himself up.

The assembled smiddy paused for the smith's words of wisdom.

"He spied young Semple comin' ower the Heather Knowe o' the Airie with his coortin' claes on—new Wellington buits that jirgit like a dry cairt wheel, shiny wristbands, an' a Glengarry bonnet cockin' on his heid wi' a muirfowl's feather in it. Peter had his bit object glass, an' syne he slippit oot an' awa' up the dyke side, kind o' cooryin' till he meets wi' my gentleman.

"'Guid e'en to ye,' says Peter.

"'It's a fine nicht, Maister Chrystie,' says Semple in his London mainner, michty politefu'.

"'Ye'll be gaun bye up the hill to the Upper Neuk, nae doot?" says Peter.

"'Weel, no,' said the young 'Pernicketie,' 'I was

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thinkin' o' gaun to yer ain hoose, Maister Chrystie.'

"'Ay, an' wha bade ye there gin I micht mak' as bauld as speir?'

"'Ahem!' says my gleg callant, gettin' geyan red aboot the gills, an' hummin' an' hawin' to get time to think; 'the fact is, I was speakin' to Miss Elizabeth on Sunday at the kirk, an' she—'

"'When Liza Chrystie gets on for mistress o' Nether Neuk I'll let ye ken, Maister Semple,' he says. 'Guid-e'en to ye.'"

* * * * *

"Na," said Rab An'erson, quite simply, "ye see, young Semple is but the third son, an' he'll no' get the ferm. He'll hae nae gear an' plenishin'—nocht ava but his wages as a coonter-louper."

"See ye onything o' thae deil's bairns, Sawny Bean's crew, that leeves ower by you?" the smith went on. "Whatever for does your maister harbor siccan a scum o' the creation? It's mair than I can imagine. He should hae pu'ed doun the rotten thack aboot their lugs lang syne. Nae guid wull come to the neeborhood by harborin' a vermin like them. They're rale descendants o' the auld Sawny Bean that leeved doon by the Piper's Cove at the Douglas Ha'."

"Ay, an' wha was he?" asked Rab of the smith, who was both a reader and archæologist to the parish.

The smith was nowise loath to tell the tale.

"Did ye never hear o' Sawny Bean, the first o' that name? He was a braw lad. He took a wife like himsel' and they leeved doon in the rocks aboot

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Portowarren like wild folk. They reared sons and dochters, an' they likewise mustered an' bred, till the place gat sic a name that naebody wad gang near. Merchants an' gaugers, packmen an' gaun bodies—a' slippit awa' an' were nae mair heard tell o'.

"Fowk thocht that the deil was walkin' the country. The fear took haud o' a' fowk by the throat, till yae nicht there was a wild woman, a' ower bluid an' bruises, cam' linkin' in to Dumfries wi' skellock on skellock, an' when she cam' to hersel' it was a fearsome tale she had to tell. Doon on the New Abbey road a tribe o' wild folk had come on her, and her man, an' twa-three ithers, and pu'ed them aff their horses, an' cuttit their throats; but her horse had taen fricht and ran awa', an' a' nicht the crew had chased her wi' horrid imprecations, till her horse fell an' brak its neck-bane on Maxwelton braes, an' she was a deid woman had she no' faa'n on wi' some Gallawa' herds comin' to Dumfries tryst. There was siccan a rinnin' an' siccan a cryin' in Dumfries as hadna been since Bruce killed the Red Comyn in the Greyfriars. A great company followed the trail on horseback wi' blood-hounds. They fand the place by the fit-marks an' reed blood, an' the dowgs took up the trail an' brocht them to the cave's mouth. In they gaed through scores o' hams an' ither things hung frae the ceilin'—fearsome things that they lookit nae mair at after the first glisk at them. An' at the far end they fand thretty or forty of the cannibals, an' them they took oot for a brisk trial an' a shorter shrift. As sune as thretty halters could be gotten they

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were a' hung up for the gleds an' the craws, an' a' the puir relics o' humanity that they had pickled an' sautit, an' smokit were taen to the kirkyaird o' New Abbey an' decently laid under the sod."

CHAPTER XXVI.

"SAWNY" BEAN.

THERE was silence in the smiddy after the smith's tale.

"Save us, that's a fearsome story!" said Rab An'erson. "D'ye think it's true?"

"Ay, it's ower true," said the smith; "but I misdoot that they maun hae missed some o' the crew, an' that some o' the clan hae gotten a settlement doon by the Black Shaws on the grun' o' yer ain maister, Peter Chrystie o' the Nether Neuk!"

His name was Bean—of that he was sure. But as he was not a Christian he took no stock in Christian names. The neighborhood called him "Sawny," impelled thereto by the gruesome stories told by the smith. The Bean family lived in a lean-to hovel under the Hanging Shaw, just where the steep Nether Neuk Bank breaks in cliff from the open plateau of the moorland towards the water edge. The Shaw was pitted with caverns, against the mouth of one of which "Sawny" Bean had built his house. He had built it with his own hands,

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and the stones of the front and side walls were the ordinary gray stones which the farmers built into their dykes. Sawny cemented it roughly with lime, begged, borrowed or stolen (but chiefly the latter), and with sand brought up from the lockside on the back of his wife. No one knew the mysterious name of the partner of Sawny Bean's joys and sorrows. He rarely addressed her directly, save to give a plain, unadorned command.

"Where have you put that ugly tyke o' yours?" Peter Chrystie would ask Sawny.

"What do I ken; speak to *that!*" he would answer, indicating his wife with his forefinger.

His word of tenderness was "You!"

"You, there! pit on the pot!" he would most often say, accompanying the order with a missile which his wife as instinctively avoided.

These things were too common to cause remark on either side. She generally had some part of her person tied up owing to her husband's tender attentions. Sometimes she would take her bruises to Nance Chrystie, to whom she was attached because she was the only soul of her own sex who was not afraid to come within gunshot of the dreadful house under the Hanging Shaw. Nance rubbed her wounds with butter and whisky, and counselled the poor slave to strike back, while the patient regarded her with wide, vague eyes of adoration; but she was far from having Nance's spirit.

It was generally supposed on Deeside that old Peter Chrystie had some very good reason for harboring such vermin on his farm. He was supposed to be paying blackmail for some of the sports of his

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youth. Sawny Bean called himself a laborer, but no one ever saw him do more serious labor than making wicker baskets and twining rabbit "grins." It was universally agreed that poaching was the honestest part of Sawny's work. And he was not thought much the worse for it in that part of the country, where contempt of the game laws is taken into the system in early youth along with the "Mother's Questions." But there were dark whispers afloat that set various burglaries, minor and major, petty larcenies of hens and ducks, and even the crowning iniquity of sheep-stealing to the discredit of the master of "Sawny Bean's Hole."

Sawny had a tribe of children running about his door, so close to one another in age and size that they seemed to overlap each other like the eaves of a house. He was said to have stolen some of them, but the accusation disproved itself, for it was unlikely that Sawny would willingly add another to the hungry mouths about his dwelling. It was much more likely that sundry children of misadventure and sin had been, for due consideration received, added to Sawny's flock, for he had too many iniquities on his head to feel a dozen or so to be any additional burden.

Minister and elder passed him by. The Cameronian minister had made one brave attempt on him; but Sawny had assumed his most idiotic expression and mumped unintelligible sounds, so that the minister had passed on, commending him to God as one mentally afflicted. It was not generally known that at the back Sawny's house abutted upon an old sand-hole, while above the birches

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and alders of the Hanging Shaw feathering the steep slope almost wholly concealed the space. Here there was a most extraordinary collection of miscellaneous rubbish; and had the farmers of the neighborhood had any idea of the number of things lifted from their several farms they would long ago have organized a raid and pulled Sawny's rickety erections about his ears. But things about a farm have a way of disappearing temporarily and turning up again unexpectedly after months or years; so most of the farmers simply grumbled or swore, according to their kind, and blamed the carelessness of the men for their losses. Here were, among a *debris* of miscellaneous articles, coulters of all sizes, "shilbins," or cart rails of manifold design, corn feed dishes, bushel measures, luggies (milking pails), harrow teeth, a deer horn mounted on a plate and with an inscription (from the big hoose, wandered off by itself at the spring cleaning). Deeper in the cavern at the back of the sand-hole were barrels, most of them containing dogs of high and low degree. These had all of them "followed a gentleman," as the advertisements say. Generally they followed Sawny with their feet braced against the road, while that kindly gentleman applied the leverage of compulsion by means of a rope over his shoulder, and encircling their necks. Sawny had an interest in letters, at least as far as the weekly Cairn Edward paper was concerned. He went over regularly to Nether Neuk on the evening of the day on which it arrived, and got Peter Chrystie to read him out the first column of the advertisements. Then if there were any dogs lost,

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which were thought worth an advertisement, Sawny would turn up at the place indicated with the animal in tow, and a pausible tale, but if no advertisement appeared within three weeks at the latest, there was a plunge in the loch some dark night and an empty barrel "to let" in the cave. Sawny was never in any danger of starvation, nor, to do him justice, were the towsy children who tumbled over each other in front of his door. Many an honest man's children went with empty bellies when Sawny's surrounded a well-stocked broth-pot. He believed in the good old monkish plan commemorated in the ballad verse :—

"The monks of Melrose made guid kail
On Friday's when they fasted ;
Nor wanted they guid beef and ale
As lang as their neighbors' lasted."

There were few things to which Sawny would not turn his hand, except honest labor. An outcast by birth and training, his war with society was very real, though as yet it had never been a very deadly one. Sawny had, it is true, no abrupt line of distinction between the acts which he was prepared to commit and those which he could not risk. But he had that kind of animal cunning which generally kept him without the operation of the civil arm, though hardly ever for a single day of his life wholly within the law. He accounted it, for instance, perfectly righteous to shoot a "gamey" or "salmon-watcher," who was, if possible, a degree more vile in his eyes ; but having once travelled to

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Dumfries to see an execution, almost the last that was ever held there in public, he returned home with an odd feeling of constriction about his Adam's apple, and a resolve like adamant not to trouble the hangman. It struck him that it would be a decidedly uncomfortable thing to be hanged so early in the morning. Sawny liked to lie long in bed, and in the good poaching seasons he kept decidedly fashionable hours. Really, he was in little danger of capture, though many a trap was laid for him. He had the native instinct of woodcraft. Eyes and ears were born with him which enabled him to hear and see things silent and black to commoner organs. As the spectroscope tells us that we do not see the whole chord of colors in a rainbow, the ultra-violet being too delicate for our eyes to observe, so Sawny Bean, with his ear to the ground, became a wild animal of the wood—every nerve strung, every sense delicate and refined to perceive what others could not. Had his life been cast in a city he might have become with his criminal instincts the greatest of criminals. Probably the Whitechapel fiend is just such a man with, in addition, an appetite for blood and a knowledge of city life corresponding to Sawny's accurate interpretation of the sights and sounds of the wood and moor.

The policeman on his tours did not make Sawny's house one of his houses of call. He had gone once only, to find the house locked and deserted. Emboldened by the silence, he had clumped heavily round the corner of the house to spy out the land, but as he turned he laid his hand accidentally on something hard and cold which protruded from a

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small hole in the wall. He stooped down to examine, and his eye looked fair down the muzzle of a smoke-blackened double-barrelled gun. He fell back as though the gun had gone off and the shot had struck him, while from the tree tops, from the rocks of the Hanging Shaw, and apparently out of the earth, there came mocking laughter and bird-like calls. Slowly the officer of the law erected himself and cautiously withdrew, his dignity and his clear buttons both a trifle dulled.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DOUBLE TRAITOR.

SINCE the telegram of Felix Durand had brought Herbert Peyton north to the wilds of Galloway, he had been lurking in the neighborhood. It was a slack time with him in his profession. French by education, child of the asphalte and the *coulisses* of Paris, though of English blood, Herbert Peyton had drifted into that most dangerous though most lucrative of occupations—that of the spy who makes capital from both sides out of his secrets. The pasteboard Napoleon who at that time ruled the destinies of France liked to believe that the secrets of the world were poured into his ear, and that he had his spies at the council boards of the revolutionary societies of all European nations. His chief of secret police found Herbert Peyton, with his

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accurate and extensive knowledge of dramatic circles and his polyglot unscrupulousness a tool fit for his hand. Peyton had been brought up among the men of "'48," and had enjoyed their confidence after they had to flee from the rigor of the new empire. Of all these men, Felix Durand had been the greatest political force. An orator, he could fire his countrymen, and his words were like sparks. He had also a magnetic power over men. It was his influence and the fear of a quick and sure dagger that kept Peyton in any degree true to the Revolutionary Committee. He had seen one of his companions lie in the Morgue, turned over on his back, with an ugly ooze welling out of a hole in his side. Felix had taken him in to see it, and had silently pointed. Herbert Peyton had not forgotten the lesson. So, though he played a double game, betraying as much as he dared to the secret police of the empire, he brought back a good deal more in return to the camp of the patriots. It was a dangerous amusement, and it needed a strong and an adroit man to play it, and this man was both.

He had come to the north without definite purposes of malice. He desired to be revenged on the woman who had scorned him and wounded him. Felix, it was true, was her protector, and it would not do openly to break with him. But though it would be too dangerous to molest the mother, he might be able to show Felix cause why the same protection need not apply to the son. At any rate, it was obviously feasible to strike and wound most deeply through the lad. This had been the explanation of his stealthy night visit to Drumquhat, which

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had been foiled through the wakefulness of Rab M'Quhirr. But he saw his way to a better plan, and he looked to Sawny Bean to help him to carry it out. Sawny's reputation and his sandhold cavern seemed strong strategic positions which would make for the success of his design.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A MISSION TO THE CROWS.

It was once again the summer at Drumquhat. The birds were building all about—the starlings in the knotholes of the great beech at the end of the stackyard, the swallows under the eaves of the outhouses. The hedge-sparrows and robins were quarrelling by every hedgerow, and making the roadsides pugnacious with their feather-scattering scufflings. The sand-martins were darting out and in their burrows in the face of Sandy Bean's sandhole. One blithe May afternoon there was company at Drumquhat, as indeed you might have seen long before you got there, by the panelled front door being open, and the mistress of the farm occasionally at it, with her black lace cap on. She scanned the fields, putting her hand to her brow and looking down the sunshine. Felix Durand had come over from Deeside, and was in the parlor, and Mistress M'Quhirr wondered a hundred times what had come over her man.

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"I never saw the marrow o' him," she said, "gin there was nae call for him to be in for his tea, he wad be trailin' in on the back o' three, askin' gin it wasna tea time yet, though his denner had had nae mair than time to settle. He pretends he disna care for his tea, but did ye ever see a man body yet that wasna as contrairy as a swine on a bleachin' green!"

This she delivered at large to whom it might concern. Nelly Anderson looked with an amused smile over to Felix Durand, who was sitting on the shiny horsehair sofa which was one of the gods of Mistress M'Quhirr's idolatry. Nelly had never become quite accustomed to seeing him there. He seemed to connect with so many things in her early tempestuous years. But after she had seen him with the ready tact of the citizen of many countries who was yet the patriot of one, partake of the Drumquhat scones and the Drumquhat tea a time or two from the special "company cups," she gradually became more reconciled.

"Come away in," she said to the irate lady of the house, who was fussing about with ruffled plumes like a setting hen put off her nest eggs. "Saunders will come in at his usual time. It's half an hour to that time now."

"Na, come he'll no'—never when he could be ony use, there never was a mair aggrevatin' man than mine—no' atween Solway an' the Cruives o' Cree!"

At this moment a heavy foot was heard coming craunching along the causeway cobbles in front of the house. A shrill voice kept up an incessant chatter, and a gruffer monosyllable broke in occasion-

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ally. Nelly Anderson stirred expectantly. It was the brisk patter of interrogation that brought the rose into her cheek and the violet softness into her eye. There never was such a boy as hers, she thought, and indeed Mary M'Quhirr agreed with her. But for his frank, honest nature the boy was in a fair way of being spoiled.

Saunders and Wattie entered. Grave greeting from the former, turbulent rejoicing from the latter —the chairs were drawn round the table and a reverent grace said, to which Felix bowed his head as humbly as though he had been brought up a true Cameronian on the Galloway uplands. Genuine reverence recognizes its fellow all the world over. The mistress was so pleased that she almost forgot to give Saunders his "paiks."

"What keepit ye sae lang, Saunders?" she inquired.

"Ask the laddie!" said her husband, smiling.

"We war lookin' for a peewheet's nest at the back o' the Craigs," said Wattie. "The peewheet cheated us twice, but we fand it the third time. There was twa eggs but nae nest!"

"Did ye bring them hame for a fry?" inquired the practical dame.

"Na, I couldna think to tak' the puir birdie's eggs," said Wattie, shaking his head sadly, "and forbye, they war verra likely half-clockit (hatched)."

"Bravo!" laughed Felix Durand, "there spoke the Scotsman. An Englishman would have taken them and seen how they turned out. A Frenchman would have taken all the credit of the sentiment if he had left them alone, but the Scotsman

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has his sentiment based on common sense. No wonder you rule the world, you Scots; some nations have sentiment and others practicality, but you have both."

"Ay," said Saunders, "ye see there's a feck o' poetry in lookin' on the hills, as the Psalmist said, but unless the hills feed the sheep, whaur's the rent to come frae, an' the plenishin' for the meal ark, an' the oo' for the blankets, an' the grey hamespun for oor backs?"

"That is true," said Felix Durand, leaning back till his white hair hung over the back of the sofa, to the admiration of Nelly Anderson, who often watched him like a daughter. "I never can make out whether you Scots have made your country what it is, or whether it has made you?"

"I think God made the two of us for each other," said Saunders, simply. "Ye see, sir, it's like this. He sees that it's guid for man to be eident [diligent], an' when langsyne He made a peculiar people for Himsel', He set them to mak' the best o' a lan' wi' routh o' milk an' honey, maybe; but gye stany for craps an' michty hilly an' dry as I've been gien to unnerstan'. Maist like a dry Gallawa' where the inhabitants were a' Sawny Beans. Though yon Ephron the Hittite was none sic a bad neebor, ony wye ye tak' him—him that Abraham bocht the cave o' Macpelah frae. But a' his kin maun hae dee't oot, I'm thinkin', afore Joshua cam'—"

"Hae anither cup, Saunders," broke in his wife practically, to moderate his flow. When Saunders got among the patriarchs there was no telling where he might end, or when. But Saunders was

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far too keen on his subject to be thus turned aside. Felix composed himself to listen. He loved to hear the not irreverent familiarity of the old Cameronian with the great folk of the Bible history. It was a new world to him whose life had been spent among Voltairean unbelief. Wattie used his opportunity to take a large lump of cake from under Mrs. MQuhirr's very nose, and then slip unobserved, save by his mother, out of the room.

"Mony's the time," continued the elder, "that I hae thocht up among the heather that the Lord fits ilka yin o' us wi' oor ain job. There's mysel' that's fond o' company, an' no averse to the drap o' drink an' the haivers, an' micht hae gane far wrang but for the grace of God—"

Here Felix Durand smiled as he thought of the Cameronian elder "going wrong" amid the coarse ribaldry of the Whinnyliggate Public.

"But the Lord sent me awa' up amang the wild fowl, to hear them cryin' to yin anither, to listen to the snipe yammerin' i' the gloamin,' whiles wailing an' cryin' like a lost soul; it's the verra gospel that I needit—man doesna need to be his lane when he's in the presence o' his Maister's warks."

"Hoots, Saunders," said his wife, "ye think far ower muckle o' the beasts that perish. What wad the minister say gin he heard ye, an' you an elder! Ye forget yersel'!"

"Beasts that perish," quo' he, "hoo do ye ken that they perish? Solomon didna ken whether or no', an' maybe ye'll no be muckle wiser. But I wush that I kenned for certain that the wild craiturs had souls o' their ain, an' that I could speak their speech;

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they would be far kindlier to work amang than the feck o' fowk."

"A graun' missionary ye wad be," said Mistress M'Quhirr, scornfully, "a missionary to the craws; but yer ower late, ma man, for Wattie's afore ye there—bless me whaur's the boy?" she added, now missing him for the first time.

"How was that, madam?" asked Felix, curious to hear how Wattie had been a missionary to the crows.

"Weel, ye see sir, this is the wye it was. The boy's fell fond o' stannin' oot on some bit rock up by the Craigs an' preachin', wi' his wye o't, and yae day wha should gang by but the minister frae Whunnyliggate, an' says he to the boy:

"'Ma man,' says he, 'what are ye makkin' sic a noise for, are ye frichtin' the craws?'

"'Na,' says Wattie, strechtforrit like, for he has nae fear o' man. 'I'm preachin', an' that frechts the craws graun'!'

"'But,' says the minister, 'when we preach we gather in the people; we do not frighten them away.'

"'Weel,' says ma man, 'it's maybe different doon at Whunnyliggate, but up at Drumquhat no' a single craw'll come near when I'm preachin'!'

"So the minister gaed his wyes wi' something to think aboot, for its weel kenned that there's an empty kirk whaurever he preaches in a' the presbytery an' e'en as far as Dumfries."

"That was the day," said Saunders, "when Wattie cam' back with the new waistcoat."

"Ay, was't," said Mistress M'Quhirr. "Wattie

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gets leave to rin juist as he likes in the simmer time, though his mither is aye fikein' an' mendin', but for a' he gets sae duddy that he's juist no' fit to be seen. But yae day he cam' in at denner time and he lookit wunnerfu' snod in a sleeved waistcoat, that was near to his heels at the back, an' had the wristban's turned up to near the elbow.

"'Where gat ye the coat, Wattie?' I asked him, as sune as I clappit my e'en on him.

"'O granny,' he said, 'dinna be angry, I juist changed coats wi' the craw bogle!'

"Ay, an' he was a deal snodder for the exchange!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

CAPTURED.

The airs of the evening are ruffling the still waters of the Tinkler's Loup. They breathe down upon it from the resinous fir wood and the dewy birch copse. A faint golden glow pervades the duskiest coverts overhanging the water's edge, while the setting sun turns all the invisible clouds above into airy wisps of glory. Down under the overhanging crest of the grey whinstone rock there is an occasional movement of the heather which to a keen eye does not seem quite natural. Now and then a bird bends that way on level wing, and, suddenly breaking the line of its flight, it rises again startled and surprised at something that it sees.

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Down there a man is lying among the heath and the bracken. He wears a moleskin cap pulled down over his eyes, a ragged coat that has once been velveteen, trousers of the color of dried clay, and unclasped clogs with the straw sticking out all round them. It is Mr. "Sawny" Bean of the Hanging Shaw. Motionless as the stones on which he lies, he keeps his watch, his eyes peering westward up the long glen. The poacher is out early to-night. But for all that, Gib M'Allister, the laird's keeper, followed him from his nest at the Hanging Shaw to within a mile of the Tinkler's Loup, and then suddenly lost him in the middle of a meadow where the rush bushes grew thick. In a moment Sawny Bean had disappeared, as though he had become a disembodied spirit. Gib went to the spot. It was by the edge of the stream with a bottom of clean gray stone. The footsteps went to the edge of the water, but further there were none. Obviously, then, the poacher must have gone either up or down the stream. Gib chose to go down the bed of the burn, plashing through the shallow water, and stepping with long strides over the deeper pools. But he had not gone thirty yards before a wild duck sprang with prodigious clatter from the bank by his side, which told him plainly that Sawny must have taken the other route and gone up stream, or he would have disturbed the bird as he passed. So skilled was Gib in woodcraft. Gib turned on his heel, and plunged away towards the moors with a sullen determination to do his duty by his master, though with little hope of being upsides with so wary and daring a law-breaker as Sawny Bean. He would

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have been even less hopeful had he known that the wild duck had been released from the poacher's hand the moment before she arose with such a sudden uproarious "squatter" under his very nose. Sawny could move more noiselessly in his clogs than an ordinary man with india-rubber soles. His heaviest movements sounded as natural as the plunging of a bullock, for it is only human sounds that the shyest of animals have any fear of. He had put his hand on the duck as she sat on her nest, plunged with the next movement into a fern-covered runnel which fell into the broader burn at that point, and, reaching forward his hand, he released the frightened wild duck just as his ponderous enemy came hulking along the trail. As the footsteps of the gamekeeper died away, Sawny shook with loutish and savage laughter. This was his idea of a good jest. If he could have clouted Gib over the head it would have been funnier, but it was well as it was.

So in a few moments he was safe in the den where we first saw him, his keen eyes taking in every motion of the beasts and birds as far as Peter Chrystie's farm town, whence the blue smoke was beginning to rise which told of the putting on of the "parritch-pot," the staple of life, morning and evening, on the upland. He saw Nance go to the byre with her "luggie" in her hand and her milking-stool over her shoulder, her head turned a little to the side as she lilted a blithe song which told whomsoever it might concern that she was either heart-whole or secure in affection returned.

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Aleck M'Quhirr had washed himself and come over early. As he followed meekly to the byre door he would have given his head to discover which was correct. Wattie had come with him. The lad had found the good-natured young giant in a good humor, and had got permission to accompany him. So as soon as Aleck was safely into the byre, and installed at Black Bess's tail, with Nance giving an occasional sidelong glance at him, Walter stole round the corner of the byre, and took the straight road for the mysterious depths of the Hanging Shaw, which he had been strictly forbidden to go near, and which, of course, his whole soul longed in consequence to explore. He hurried along, his legs twinkling in the sun, and his shadow climbing up the bank till it was thirty or forty feet long—so long that he stood to watch it a moment, and in order to dance and turn somersaults to see the dark giant on the hillside do likewise. As he runs along the trout are rising in the Tinkler's Loup, and making little o's on the still surface of the pool. He wishes he had a fishing-rod, and bethinks himself of the twine and bent pin in his pocket. He will cut a rod for himself, and surprise them all by bringing home half a dozen speckled beauties. He gets his knife out of his pocket, spies a promising clump of hazel, and clambers up to begin operations. But before he can do more than set the serrated edge of his knife against the apple-green bark a sudden darkness comes over him, the noise of many waters surge in his ears, he tries to call out, but his voice does not sound at all, and a wave of

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blackness swallows him up. In five minutes Sawny Bean has him trussed safely in the corn sack which he carries over his shoulder.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SAND CAVERN.

When Walter came to himself he was in some dark place lying on his back. He put out first one hand and then the other, cautiously. He was not in the barn, for it was not straw that he touched, but something cold and dry. It was sand. He knew it by the raspy, uncomfortable feel of it. Now, as we know, Walter Anderson was not a boy easily frightened. He remembered that something had fallen on him as he came up the path that led to the Hanging Shaw. He felt for his knife and it was with a pang that he recognized that it was gone. It was his sole defence. He began to move cautiously. He could feel the loose grains under him, and the compact, sandy walls dry and hard all about him. Trying to crawl in a straight line he became aware of a sharp pull on his left ankle. He turned quickly, and, putting his hand down to the place, found an iron ring went round his ankle, to which a chain was attached. He followed the chain with his hand till it came to a staple driven deep into a wooden upright. Putting his hand forward, he heard the rustling of straw, and, crawling cautiously forward,

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he found himself in an arched wooden barrel, the bottom of which was covered thickly with straw. The barrel was open at both ends, and through the further there came a faint glimmering of light. Walter crawled towards it, but had not got his own length out of the barrel when the pull on the ring round his ankle told him that he had got to the limit of his tether.

Walter Anderson lay a long while on his elbow watching the glimmering light as it gradually faded away, and complete darkness surrounded him. He had not the least idea where he was or what would become of him, but he had been trained in the belief that there is nothing so unbecoming a man as tears, besides which they were generally useless; so he crawled back into his barrel, curled himself up among the straw, adjusted his chain and ring in as easy a position as possible, said his prayers, and went quietly to sleep.

When he awoke it took him a few minutes to convince himself that he had not been dreaming, but the chain and ring were too patent, and the straw of the barrel had not the fresh crispness of the corn sheaves in the barn.

He began to feel hungry. It occurred to him to wonder if shouting would do any good. Finally he decided that he would not shout, for very likely the persons who might hear might be more inclined to do him harm than good.

The light through the opening grew brighter till the whole of Walter's cavern was fairly illuminated. Walter lay on his elbow looking wistfully at the angle of the sandy wall round which he could not

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see. In a little while he heard some one moving towards him, but even then it did not occur to him to be afraid. As he watched there came round the bend a slender figure clothed in a long, ragged garment of some faded color. It was a girl with wild elf-locks, and such beady black eyes swimming in lustre that Walter gasped with amazement.

"Wha may ye be?" he questioned, instinctively, after a pause to recover himself.

"They ca' me the 'Hoolet,'" said the vision, frankly.

"But what's yer ither name?" said Walter, who, like all boys, was a stickler for genealogy.

"My mither ca's me Jenny when she's pleased, an' my faither does naething but ca' me ower (knocks me over)," returned the girl, sharply.

"Surely I've seen ye afore?" continued Walter, affably.

"Ou, ay; ye pat oot yer tongue at me the last time ye met me on the hill, an' ye cloddit my twa brithers wi' stanes for meddling wi' yer black pet lamb."

"Then ye'll be yin o' the Beans?" Walter said, beginning to realize in whose hands he was.

"Jenny Bean is my name. Can ye hinder it?" said the "Hoolet," defiantly.

Walter could not gainsay the fact, but he wished heartily it had been otherwise.

"Come here, and let me look at ye, Jenny. Ay, but ye hae bonny een!"—this with the guile of the deceitful sex.

Jenny came nearer, and sat down by the side of the barrel, pleased in spite of herself.

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"What for did ye pit oot yer tongue at me, gin I hae bonny een? They're the same yins I had afore!" she asked, pertinently.

"Ye wadna let me look at them," said Wattie, with politic caution. "Can ye no' let me oot o' this?" he continued.

"Na, that I canna—it was my faither that brocht ye here, and an awfu'-like man wi' him. This is where he keeps the dowgs he steals," continued Sawny Bean's daughter, frankly; "I canna let ye awa', but I can bring ye something to eat."

"Can ye no' gang an' tell my mither, then?" said Wattie, "an' she'll come an' fetch me?"

"Na," said the "Hoolet," "my faither has lockit the door, an' even my mither canna get oot for a drap o' water till he comes hame. He droons the dowgs that he gets na siller for i' the loch; but I'm sure he'll no' droon you!"

Walter was glad to hear this, but wished he could put more faith in the assurances. Then the "Hoolet" brought Wattie a jug of "treacle-ale" and three farrels of cake.

"There's an awfu' bonny wee lassie up at Deeside that I saw ye playin' wi'," suggested the "Hoolet;" "where does she come frae?"

"She comes frae France," said Wattie, enthusiastically. "Ay, she's the bonniest—"

The "Hoolet" here stamped her bare foot on the sand floor of the dungeon.

"Get her to fetch ye treacle beer an' cake, then," she exclaimed, as she flung off down the passage.

Walter listened to the sound of her retreating footsteps. He was sorry he had offended her, but

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for the life of him he did not know how he had done it.

Five minutes afterwards a hand reached over the barrel, and dropped in the sand a wooden plate with a lump of butter on it as large as his hand.

"Pit that on the cake for kitchen!" said the voice of the "Hoolet," repentently.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WALTER PREACHING TO THE HEATHEN.

WALTER had other visitors that day besides the "Hoolet." First of all a dog of exceedingly composite breed and much humility of demeanor visited him. It looked familiar with kicks and ill-usage, and it whined and licked his hand in sympathy and gratitude when he stroked its head. The pampered favorite takes a caress as his due even if he permits it at all, but the outcast shows a kind of pathetic surprise, as though instincts of pleasure hitherto unknown were awaking within its weary breast.

But mostly it was deathly quiet within Walter's sand prison-house. Besides the light which came round the outward bend of the cave, there was one bright ray of sunlight which made a brilliant spot on the dull yellow wall above Walter's barrel. The spot slowly crossed the wall as the sun took his long midsummer sweep. Walter was not old

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enough to make a sun-dial of it, but the bright fleck cheered him in his loneliness, and kept him company all day. Once it was closed up for some minutes, and Walter grew vaguely uneasy with the sense of some sinister eye looking him through and through. He looked all about, moving as far round in a semicircle as the limits of his riveted chain would allow him; but he could see nothing but smooth sand, and on one side the worn side of a rock, apparently smoothed by water.

It was dull work sitting there. So in time Walter bethought himself of occupation. With the broad end of a barrel hoop he made himself a scoop for the sand, and having recently been reading the wars of the Jews, he set about the construction of such a fortress as had never been made in the sand-hole at home. It was, in fact, Jerusalem of the siege brought up to date with the latest improvements known to Walter's science of fortification. In defiance of Josephus, Walter erected bastions and counterscarps around the Tower of Hippicus, and even mounted cannon (made of barrel staves) in the embrasures. So engrossed with this did he become that he forgot about his imprisonment and even about his hunger. The sand was soft and pliable, stopping where he put it, and readily taking any mould. Really, it was not such a bad thing to be tied up like a dog after all.

While he bent over his work, oblivious to all else, two pair of bright eyes stole up to the barrel, and looked over in wonder and delight. They belonged to the "Hoolet" and her brother, better known as "Sawny Beans' Deil." The "Hoolet" had revealed

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the existence of this fascinating prisoner to her brother with mystic ceremonies.

"Gin I tell ye something, Deil," she said, "ye'll swear to tell naebody ?"

"I'll say 'As sure as daith,'" said the "Deil."

"Na; ye said that afore, an' ye gaed an' telled my faither. Ye'll hae to cross it in bluid this time!" said the "Hoolet," who was far advanced in the freemasonry of the occult sciences.

Whereupon she drew out of her pocket a thin black leather-covered little book of some twenty leaves, covered with such signs as children draw when they are learning their letters. This was the "Hoolet's" dream book and book of magic. She opened it at the last page, and on the unprinted portion at the foot of the page she pointed out to the "Deil" a deeply scored mark of a form crudely cruciform, now faded to an unpleasant rusty red color.

The "Hoolet" then produced a sharp-pointed bone out of the bosom of her dress.

"Let us see yer airm," she said.

"Sawny Bean's Deil" reluctantly bared a rough and very dirty limb.

"Will it be verra sair ?" he asked, flinching from his sister's grim determination.

The "Hoolet" answered by a rapid twirl of the pointed bone between her finger and thumb, while she held his arm tight in her other hand.

"Ow! ow! ye randy!" said the "Deil," wringing his arm out of her grasp.

"Hoots, Deil, it's a' by noo!" returned his sister, calmly.

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A red speck had started out from the back of his wrist, in which the "Hoolet" directed him to wet his forefinger and make his cross on the sacred spot where many crosses had evidently been made before. Without knowing it, the "Deil" had signed his adhesion to the Christian faith. He had put his X mark under the Creed, which is usually printed at the end of the penny copies of the Shorter Catechism. This was the "Hoolet's" sacred book. She had picked it up on the road, where some child on his way to school had dropped it. So, having found it, she made a fetish of it. Poor "Hoolet"! She was not the first who had done so.

Thus it was that two came to be in the wondrous secret of the boy in the cave; but such was Sawny Bean's authority over his wild clan, and such the feeling of solidarity among them, that neither of them dreamed of telling the outer world of the secret. The Hanging Shaw was far from the current of farmhouse gossip and village talk, and the scions of the house of Bean were not received into society; but among the village children they possessed a gaudy prestige on account of never having to go to school, get up early, go to bed soon, or wash their faces. They were supposed to have all that any mortal could wish for, and as the chance of a gossip with one of these happy mortals did not often present itself, it was eagerly taken advantage of when it did. It was not long, therefore, before the "Deil" heard all about the vanishing of little Walter Anderson, and how there had been such racing over the country as never had been within the memory of man. A hundred men had

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been out on the Carsephairn Hills and over the Kells Range as far as Minnigaff, but no trace of him had been found. He had once been lost before and had taken to the hills, but on this occasion it was supposed that he had fallen into some bottomless hill tarn or was lying in the cleaving of some moss hag. His mother, they said, had gone out of her mind.

Meanwhile Walter proceeded with the siege of Jerusalem, and, having completed the construction of the temple by hoisting the Union Jack drawn with pencil on a "stap" of the barrel, he turned his attention to the construction of the lines of attack. While he was settling preliminaries he sat up a moment to think, and was exceedingly astonished to see two heads duck behind the barrel with a simultaneous jerk. Walter burst out laughing.

"Come oot, gin that's you, Hoolet!" said Walter, with his natural air of authority over all women folk.

"Tell us what yer makin', then," said the "Hoolet," "an' we'll help."

"I'm making Jerusalem," answered the architect.

"What's that?" asked the "Deil," quickly, who thought it was perhaps something to eat.

Walter stared in dumb amazement. He could not conceive that any one in the world did not know what Jerusalem was.

"Jerusalem was where they killed Christ, ye ken," he said, softly.

"What did they kill Him for?" continued the "Deil."

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"They hanged Him on a tree, with nails through His hands and feet; but He loved them, and said, 'Father, forgive them,'" said Walter, who had the instincts of a preacher in him.

"I dinna believe't. Noo then!" interjected the "Hoolet," suddenly. "They wadna hae hung me on a tree. I bit Peter Chrystie on the hand till he let me aff when he was gaun to lick me."

"Ay; but He wasna like us," Wattie explained. "He juist wanted to die because He loved us. They were gaun to make Him a king, and the boys threw branches o' trees on the road afore Him when He cam' riding into Jerusalem—"

"That wad be when the gamekeeper wasna watchin'!" said the "Deil."

"Was there na lassies there?" inquired the "Hoolet," ignoring her brother.

"My mither didna say, but I think it's likely. There never was a crood o' boys withoot a lassie or twa comin' rinnin' after them," said Walter, critically.

"Lassies are nae guid ava," said the "Deil."

His sister gave him a sound cuff on the side of the head, apparently without looking at him, and continued her examination.

"Ye say He's dead?" she went on.

"My mother says that He's in heaven noo, an that He loves us just the same as when He was on the earth," said Walter.

"Loves you?" inquired the "Hoolet."

"Ay," said Walter, "my mither says that."

"An' me?" continued she, vehemently.

"Ay," said Walter, a little more doubtfully.

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"An' the Deil?" pursued the remorseless inquisitor.

"I—I think so," said Walter.

"Then it's a big lee. Dead folk dinna love, nor hear, nor speak. I ken, for I've listened mony a day at a' the grave heids in the kirkyaird."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT.

It was past ten when Nelly Anderson stepped out of the company front door of the farm-house of Drumquhat. She came quickly and lightly out of the still white bedroom. There at the foot of her own bed was the small trundle of her lost boy, Walter, now more than a week gone from her ken. She made it up carefully every morning, and at eve she turned down the clothes as though he were ready to come in from the field as soon as he had taken the cows afield after the milking hour. Long after she was out in the moonlight she saw the little bed glimmering white in the still room. She closed the door softly behind her, and came out into the lucid dewy twilight. Golden clouds lay yet in the west, but there was a brightness also in the east, as though the sun were shaking hands with both horizons across the nether world.

Nelly Anderson was dressed in the short, close-fitting dress of gray country cloth in which she took

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her evening rambles with her boy. She had made the dress herself, and now wore it because it was Walter's favorite. On her head there was one of Walter's blue bonnets, with a spray of dead hawthorn sticking where he had placed it on the evening before he had gone to Nether Neuk. Her face was pale even in the flush of the after twilight, but her eyes were abysses of deep violet, and her lips seemed to have collected all the color of her face, and shone like a cluster of geranium alone in the snow.

Walter's mother had not at all gone out of her mind, as the clash of the countryside had reported to the "Hoolet." She had only more completely than ever found her mind. She thought more clearly, saw more definitely, acted more promptly than she ever had done in her life. Not only had she been the life and soul of the search—directing, encouraging, discovering reasons for failure, and inspiring hopes of success—but she had gone abroad each night along all the old roads that she had taken with Wattie. She explored every swamp, skirted every loch, pushed her way through every birch-fringed glen, and often did not return to Drumquhat till the morning cocks were crowing, and Saunders, the early riser, was stirring in his bed. Walter's dear "Gran," the resolute and resourceful, was far more apparently unhinged than his mother.

To-night she set out with a determination as strong and certain as when first she took to these nocturnal wanderings. The mother's instinct, long in abeyance, was fully developed in her now. Walter in his den was sorry for his mother, and often

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thought of her; but, boylike, he found even in his forced imprisonment something to console himself with, and for hours together, sad to say, he lost himself in his sand castles and the education of the "Hoolet" and the "Deil."

To-night Nelly Anderson has a new route before her. She strikes out over the hill with confident and eager steps, avoiding the drains and moss holes with the practiced art of a native. She who had been born and reared among the houses and pavements of a far city, now on this Galloway moor, and under the pressure of anxiety, has developed almost the *finesse* of Sawny Bean himself. She skirts the dyke which leads over the moor, and which continues almost direct to the end of Peter Chrystie's barn at Nether Neuk. Then to the left, avoiding the farmhouses, where a dog is fitfully barking from some general sense of uneasiness, as though regretting that he had not something definite to bark at.

Then down the course of Neuk Burn she turns, seeing as she breasts the bank the moon showing a pale and moth-eaten edge over the Dornal Hill. Soon she is under the Hanging Shaw overhead. Sawny Bean's mansion is just round the curve of the burn. At this point she strikes up the bank. With wonderful litheness and alacrity she climbs the steep slope, handing herself from point to point by the hazel shoots which grow thickly all the way up out of every crevice of rock. When she reaches the top she steps out upon a small square of turf. For a moment she pauses, panting. She looks over the tops of the hazels and birches to the east. Turning, the dark figure of a man faces her suddenly in

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the glimmer of the late moonshine. It needs no second glance to tell her who it is.

"I have found thee, O mine enemy!" is the cry of her heart; but there is a gladness, too, in it—a kind of joy that the end is come, and that the next half-hour will settle all uncertainty. She cannot mistake Herbert Peyton, the evil genius of her youth. She knows the figure all too well. She had fainted at one glimpse of it in broad day, and surrounded by troops of friends, at the little bridge on the way from the Cameronian kirk in Cairn Edward so long ago, but now, alone and defenceless, she is braced till her muscles are like steel and her blood runs warm like wine.

They stand looking at each other, these two. Their eyes meet over the years. It is a terrible meeting when eyes that once looked love meet in hatred, and as Nelly Anderson looks at the man who had tried to darken her youth, she sees him over her dead husband's grave.

The man did not move. He stood where he had stood when Nelly Anderson came out of the copsewood. He stood as though it were the most natural thing in the world that she should be there, and that she should arrive in this manner.

"Well, Nell," he said, lightly, with a mocking accent in his voice, "who would have thought of seeing you upon the Hanging Shaw."

Nelly Anderson, with her head very high and her hands behind her, answered as though she had not heard the question.

"What have you done with my boy?"

Herbert Peyton laughed a laugh of intense en-

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joyment. It was such a low and mellow laugh that to any but a distracted mother its merriment might have been contagious. He took in the exquisite jest of the situation for a long moment before he answered :

"He's right below where you are standing at this moment."

Nelly Anderson reeled as though a bullet had struck her.

"Dead, dead !" she muttered, her hands up at her throat; "my boy dead !"

The next moment she recovered herself. She took a step nearer to the man, who stood still in the same place, swaying his body like one who finds his position comfortable and does not think of changing it.

"I do not believe it, liar ! You have not the courage to kill even a boy. You have only the courage to lie !" she said, bitterly.

"No, Nelly ; it's you that have the courage to kill—and for five years you thought you had killed me—and I am here yet ! And the boy for whom you put the knife into me, and left me for dead—well, *he* is not here."

"Then you are a murderer !"

"Pshaw ! what is that so long as only you and I know, Nelly ? You were a murderess for five years, you know, and you seem to have thriven on it, too. I'll get along without your benediction, Nell, or even your old Psalm-singer's !"

The girl was silent.

"It was kind of you to come to the Hanging Shaw," went on the soft voice. "It will be very

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convenient. You have not left word with the Psalm-singer, I think, that you were coming to see me to-night. That will suit me very well. There is a vacant lot for you next your son, *chèrie*. If you will step this way I will be pleased to show you over the premises."

Again the mocking gurgle, like a demon laughing down in the earth, rang out.

Nelly Anderson moved forward as if fascinated. As she passed over the little square of turf on which they had been standing, and where the bank began to slope on the other side, she came to the top of an incline of soft sand which ended in a wide black mouth of some deep excavation. On the top of the sand incline Nelly Anderson caught sight of something lying at her feet in the faint moonbeams. Her heart gave a stound as she stooped to pick it up. It was her Walter's knitted "comforter," which she had made last winter with her own hands. As she stooped the man came behind her, and catching her by the shoulders threw his weight against her. But the girl, turning, caught her assailant with nervous fingers as both of them went sliding down the slope together towards the yawning mouth of the cave. As they did so, two figures dashed forward, both of them men—one across the moonlit turf, and the other crashing up through the hazel bushes. Darting towards the sand slope, they fell against each other at the moment when their feet encountered the yielding sand. Their superior impetus brought them to the mouth of the dark opening almost as quickly as Nelly Anderson and her assailant. Herbert Peyton had not anticipated the

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strength of his opponent, and he struggled vainly to disengage his arms to thrust her downwards from him. In the moment of struggle the two additional combatants were upon him. Nelly Anderson was snatched from him to one side, and a pair of heavy hands were laid on his neck at the other. It was Archie Grierson in whose arms Nelly found herself, and it was Sawny Bean who laid his great paws so uncomfortably athwart Herbert Peyton's throat.

"Quaite, noo, or I'll choke the life oot o' ye," said Sawny, sending his thumbs home in a knowing manner.

Herbert Peyton, finding the fates were going against him in this marked way, struck out suddenly with both feet, kicking away the uprights and struts which supported the mouth of the excavation.

The moment after there was a strange quiver of the whole bank. It seemed at once to tilt forward and to settle down with a soft rumble and a hissing rush. The opening of the cave closed up, and the sand slope stretched on unbroken to the dark edge of the Hanging Shaw. Overhead the "Hoolet" and the "Deil" danced like imps of darkness.

Sawny Bean relaxed the pressure of his thumbs on the throat of his late ally in sheer astonishment.

Herbert Peyton laughed a little in a hoarser manner than before, but there was the same note of triumph in his tone.

"That settles the brat at last!" he said.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

ARCHIE GRIERSON'S THIRD SERVICE.

For a few moments the four figures remained in the same positions. There were two or three spasmodic heavings of the sea of sand before it finally settled into rest. A soft hissing sound filled all the valley, as of summer rain on a roof.

"That's the caves fillin' up," said Sawny Bean, loosening his grip to listen.

The man under his grasp glided like a snake from underneath his hand, and started to flee up the slope; but Sawny was no blunderer on his own ground. With his heavy oak staff he struck at the ascending figure climbing the side of the sandhole. The blow took effect in the hollow of the knee, just behind the knee-cap. It was an old trick of the poacher's—a stroke that never needs to be repeated. Herbert Peyton fell. In a few moments Sawny had improvised a rough gag for his prisoner, tying it also round his head to make sure. Archie Grierson had assisted Nelly out of the pit, and they two stood silent in the moonlight on the green till Sawny had brought his prisoner to the top of the declivity.

"The next crack I gie ye will be on the heid; ye'll no' ask a third," said Sawny, warningly.

Sawny Bean was not long in trussing up his man, and, leaving Archie and Nelly to look after him, he darted down to discover what were the changes

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wrought in the friable face of the cliff by the kicking away of the cave supports by Herbert Peyton. Apparently the whole side of the sandhill had fallen in.

While Sawny was gone, Nelly Anderson and Archie Grierson stood looking at each other on either side of the prostrate and helplsss man. Neither had any idea what had occurred. A vague, dull fear sat on their hearts—Nelly in terror about Walter, whom she had heard called dead, and Archie watching with eyes faithful and loyal those of his mistress. Nelly swayed slightly, as though, in spite of her resolution she might have fallen. Archie was about to spring to her assistance, but something in her look restrained him. She put out her hand across the prostrate figure, and Archie Grierson, reaching his long arm over, took it in his nervous grasp. They both looked down, and staring up with a piercing insistency, they saw the blazing eyes of the gagged man looking at them as though the force of hateful looks had power to kill. But Nelly Anderson had long passed the time when any glances of this man could thrill or annoy her. They came from a dead past of which she had burned the records. She had come up out of the pit of trouble with a nature purified and ennobled. She had seen the Cross of Wood.

Archie Grierson's love had ever burned stronger and his courage risen higher. After his second ride he was content to let the remembrance of that time of trial sink to oblivion, but Nelly had not forgotten his kindness or the kiss that she had given him. Only she could not believe that out of the embers

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of her life the flame of a worthy love could even yet arise. But Archie, strong in the memory of her kiss, had no doubts. She had knighted him with a touch of womanly lips. She was for him the one woman "whose lightest whisper moved him more than all the ranged reasons of the world."

Thus they stood for a long five minutes, while Sawny made his explorations underneath. Their hands bridged the enemy, and the electric current of love mutually supported them. Neither knew how it was that Sawny had dropped as a bolt from the blue, and taken the side of the right. But they were content to wait till they had light on that as on other things, because they loved one another.

A lithe figure, clad in fluttering and picturesque rags, alighted softly besides them, dropping as noiselessly as a wood squirrel in the moonlight upon the wan grass. It was the "Hoolet."

She did not waste a glance on Nelly, but without prelude addressed herself to Archie.

"You're to gang ower to Peter Chrystie's, an' knock at the third window frae the barn end, an' ask for a' the spades and picks that they hae, an' come back as fast as ye can."

"Is Walter dead?" asked his mother, her hands clasped like vices one upon the other.

"Deid!" said the "Hoolet." "Wattie's no' deid, but he's buriet, an' he'll sune be deid gin we dinna howk him oot. Haste ye fast!" she said, turning fiercely and imperiously to Archie, who lingered undecided. "Mind, the third window!" she cried after him as he went.

Archie Grierson soon reached the farmhouse of

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Nether Neuk, which loomed up behind its beech trees and few domed haystacks which yet remained of last year's crop of meadow hay. It rose white and still, like a deserted fortalice, the glassless windows of the barn loopholed as if for musketry. Archie had known no fear when he arose out of his heathery lair on the edge of the wood to rush on the assailant of his love, but he was conscious of a very different feeling now when he moved like a thief along the front of the buildings of Nether Neuk, very plain in the moonbeams. He had heard of Peter Chrystie and his reception of young men found wandering upon the premises at night, and for all his heart was with the party on the Hanging Shaw, he could not but wish that the "Hoolet" had gone upon her own errand.

At the third window he paused, drew a long breath and then knocked gently. It was new business for him this—something he had not learnt at college. The corner of the blind turned up for a moment, and he had no more than time to catch a glimpse of fluttering white, which might or might not have been mixed up with the mischief-loving eyes and tangled hair of Nance Chrystie. He had not time to realize his impression, for a gun went off like a clap of thunder, a storm of pellets whistled about his ears, something stung him on the leg for a moment only, and a voice came roaring from aloft. Instinctively Archie turned and fled. He acted on the good Irish maxim that it is better to be "a coward for five minutes than dead for all one's life."

At twenty-four he may be excused. Probably

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the heroes of Trafalgar and Waterloo would have done the same in his circumstances.

"I'll learn ye to come to the Nether Neuk at twal o'clock at night withoot an invite!" said the stormy voice of Peter Chrystie. "Rab Anderson! Saw ye ocht o' Rab Anderson, lazy taed! It's him that was to watch for scoondrels this nicht!"

By this time Archie Grierson was safe under the cover of the fir plantation. He had scarcely got behind a tree trunk till another gunshot went off, and the leaden hail thrashed into the leaves overhead. As soon as he got under cover he regretted that he had not stood his ground, and explained the perfect propriety of his errand. He could have bitten his tongue for the undignified manner of his retreat, but he did not see very well how to alter it now. Besides which, if the "Hoolet" had meant him to inform the master of the house she would not have asked him to go to a window in preference to sending him to the door. He was feeling like a convicted thief when a pair of soft arms were laid about his neck, and he instinctively turned to receive as warm and willing a kiss as it ever fell to the lot of unworthy son of Adam freely to obtain. Archie stood petrified.

"Oh, Aleck," said a hidden voice, somewhere from the upper region of his shoulder, "he hasn't hurt you, has he; it was only peas, dear; I drew the lead drops mysel' yestreen."

For a moment Archie tried to speak, but the position was distinctly awkward. But before he could speak another figure stood before them. The moonbeams shimmered through the trees, and Archie

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could see that it was his friend Aleck M'Quhirr, Younger, of Drumquhat. His paleness was distinctly greater than even the faint moonbeams could account for.

"Nancy Chrystie, I've dune wi' you," he said, his fresh young voice trembling.

Nance lifted her head with a stifled cry, and pushed Archie away from her violently, then stood with her hands still stretched before her, looking wildly from one to the other.

"And as for you, Archie Grierson, I'll settle wi' you for this, as sure as there is a God in heaven!" Aleck went on, furiously.

"Oh, Aleck, Aleck!" faltered the girl.

"Haud yer tongue. I've dune wi' ye," cried Aleck, both his accent and rudeness testifying to his jangled nerves.

Archie Grierson came to himself in a moment. The scene he had left on the hill rose up before him. He stepped after his friend quickly. Aleck would not turn for the hand laid on his shoulder. In another moment he would have been out in the moonlight. Archie recognized that it was not a time for reasoning. He twisted his hand into the collar of the giant, threw his weight backward and brought him to the ground.

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Aleck," he said. "Listen, Wattie Anderson is buried in the sand over at the Hanging Shaw. I came over to get picks and shovels. Nance thought it was you at the window. Man, have some sense, and be thankful for sic a lass!"

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"Come into the barn by the back door and get the spades, you great silly stupid," said Nance, indignantly, finding her voice suddenly.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW WATTIE ESCAPED.

When the two men bearing the digging tools arrived on the platform which formed the crest of the sandy ridge of the Hanging Shaw, the east was brightening with a faint orange, and the first shrill cock was awakening his harem in some farmyard far up the hillside. But it was yet very early, though the stir of awakening life began, in those days of mid June, before even the dews of evening had time to cake the dust on the roads. When Archie Grierson and Aleck came again to the open square of sward it was deserted. Neither Nelly Anderson nor the "Hoolet" was to be seen. Sawny Bean's prisoner had also vanished. From the bottom of the Shaw came the dull knocking of a mallet. They paused in the changing light, and looked helplessly at one another like men who had come on a foolish errand. A silhouetted imp danced towards them.

"It's the Deil," said Aleck, stating a fact.

It was the eldest son of the house of Bean

"The 'Hoolet' sent word that ye were to come wi' me quick, but if Nance Chrystie cam' wi' ye she was to gang hame!"

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"Nance Chrystie's no' gaun hame till she likes, 'Deil,' " answered that young woman for herself from the rear of the procession, which she had followed unknown and undiscovered.

She was a wilful as well as a winsome young woman, and wont to presume on the knowledge that Aleck was her obedient slave. She had often told him that he was accountable for her actions. She did what she pleased, but blamed him for whatever went wrong. She was the only woman who ever did this.

The "Deil" guided them to the lower cave entrance, where Sawny Bean was laboring with his arms bared to the elbow, his wife standing by with a smoky torch made from a dried and resinous pine branch. Nelly was at work also, her slender body swaying with the strength of her blows, as she brought the face of the sandbank down with strokes which seemed too great for a woman's muscles. In a few moments the young men were also working with a will, but Nance had again disappeared like a will-o'-the-wisp. The "Hoolet" and the "Deil" had also vanished with congenial unanimity. The light grew brighter as the blush of dawn spread. The cold twinkle of stars and the wan light of the moon grew inappropriate and distasteful. Still in the growing light the three men and the one woman labored, while the pale wife of Sawny Bean held the now needless torch.

But they made but little headway. Sawny glanced at the small impression they had made, then aloft at the brightening sky, and again attacked the wall of sand. Nelly Anderson had never paused since she

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took her heavy navvy's pick in hand, striking as if unconscious of the weight of the instrument she handled. There was a formless and aching fear in their hearts. Each one of them knew that what they were doing was hopeless. There was no road to Walter Anderson, dead or alive, working as they were doing. Yet, as Sawny Bean knew, there was no other way.

Aloft the "Hoolet" and the "Deil" danced like wild things. Sawny glanced once at his offspring, and sent a curse roaring at them, but they only danced the wilder and more frantically. Nance Chrystie was still invisible. The day came at last. The light poured over the moors, sending lances of clear shining even into the deep copses of the Hanging Shaw.

A small stone hit Aleck on the hat as he was pushing it back to wipe his brow. He looked about him, and, with one hand on a rowan tree which clung desperately to the side of the crumbling cliff, and one hand beckoning bewitchingly to him, was Nance Chrystie. He grew cold to look at her, but she only leant the further over and beckoned the more vehemently.

"Come up here, all of you!" she called down in a stage whisper.

"I'll be the daith o' that lassie," said Sawny Bean, referring to his offspring, the "Hoolet's" waywardness lying hard upon his paternal feelings when he thought of the trouble and expense it had been to rear her.

But all the party, glad of any change that would take them away from the hopelessness of their

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labor, clambered out of the excavation which they had so futilely made, and took their way up the rugged bank, climbing and pulling themselves higher by the bending shoots of the birch and hazel.

On reaching the top they found themselves on another plateau, quite distinct from that on which the earlier scenes of the evening had been enacted. It was, indeed, a private place of refuge discovered and exclusively used by the "Hoolet" and the "Deil." The proprietors were there before them, dancing with even more than their usual abandon. Even Nance Chrystie could hardly keep her feet still. She pointed silently to something lying on the sunny side of a tree, wrapped in some kind of dark shawl. Nelly Anderson went quickly forward. She stooped down, drew back the covering, and bent towards the ground. In a moment she was lying upon it, pressing something to her bosom, and uttering half articulate sounds of affection and happiness. Sawny, Archie, and Aleck came forward also, and stood dumbly at gaze. The "Hoolet" and the "Deil" excelled themselves in fantastic contortions, while Nance Chrystie, her work done, quietly took herself away in the direction of the dragon-guarded dwelling of Nether Neuk. She was so happy that she even went in by the front door, careless whether her father should see her or not.

What Nelly Anderson found at the foot of the tree was Wattie, slumbering cosily in Nance Chrystie's shawl. The "Deil" and the "Hoolet" had preceded Sawny himself in turning traitor to the evil genius of the house of Bean, and Wattie had

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been taken by them out of the barrel the previous afternoon. They had conveyed him up to their secret haunt, and the three had been employed till dusk in the building of houses made of pairs of stones laid side by side. Then Wattie made an afternoon call upon the "Hoolet" at her house, and in a little that young lady repaid the civility. The "Deil" was the coachman on both occasions, and filled any subordinate roles that might be necessary, grateful and anxious to please, though neither Wattie nor his own sister treated him better than a dog.

"It disna do to be michty politeful to coachmen," said the "Hoolet," as she fetched him a "daub" on the side of the head to bring him to a sense of his position.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A NEW PRISONER IN THE BARREL.

THE safety of Walter did not settle the fate of Herbert Peyton. The reasons which induced the change in Sawny Bean's allegiance remained hidden in his own dark breast. If Nance Chrystie knew she told no one—least of all her sweetheart, Aleck, whose slow moorland earnestness and honesty were like clay in the hands of his mercurial and imperious mistress.

Sawny Bean, having seen the rejoicing party going their ways to settle the question of their

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absences with their several households, turned his attention to his homestead and its dependencies.

The lean-to house set in the angle of the dell had escaped the downward rush of sand which had settled all about the outhouses and the cave openings at which the party had vainly labored. The coops and baskets which usually contained the produce of his poaching raids were mostly overturned, and some of them half buried. The "Deil" was digging something out at one side.

"Let that alane, ye limb!" said his affectionate father. "What are ye howk, howkin' at there? I'll break the back o' ye!"

Suiting the action to the amiable intention, Sawny threw the spade which was in his hand at his son, but the "Deil" stepped aside with practiced grace, and threw a sod at his father with better aim. The tussock of grass took effect on the poacher's moleskin cap, and the sand scattered into his eyes. His remarks need not be recorded *verbatim* in this place. This is a moral tale.

Sawny's wrath subsided into sulky growling, and rumbled away into the depths beneath his corduroy waistcoat. He passed the front of his modest mansion, kicked the door open because his wife had just closed it, and knocked over two or three tow-headed children who happened to come within reach. He felt that he had been virtuous enough to last for some time. Having relieved himself in this way, he pulled away a turf and wicker screen which hid the entrance to the most northerly of the sandholes, one which lay so far under the shelter of the rock that the sand had passed it by. Pulling the wicker

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after him he entered, and in the dusk of the passage he stopped before a similar barrel to that which had contained Walter during his detention. Within lay Walter's enemy, Herbert Peyton, bound and gagged. Sawny coolly looked him over, turned him with his foot once or twice as if he had been a bale of goods, and finally, having slacked one or two of his bonds, and laid the iron bar of a life preserver ready to his own right hand, he took the gag out of his prisoner's mouth.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE ROBBERY OF HER MAJESTY'S MAILS.

This chapter is retrospective and explanatory. If the reader does not like its present position, it can, like the American politician's sentiments, be changed. The sudden alteration of the intentions and partizanship of Mr. Sawny Bean was no doubt exceedingly puzzling to every one concerned—except, it may be suspected, to Miss Nance Chrystie. The simple incidents narrated in this chapter may throw some light upon the mystery. They took place several days before the rescue from the cave narrated in the last pages, but some days after the imprisonment of Walter Anderson in the cave.

Her Majesty's mails were transported between Cairn Edward and Whinnyliggate by way of the village of Balmaclachan. Richard Sproat, the

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lame post, commonly answering to the name of "Hirple Dick," carried them. They were contained in a leather bag till Dick got outside the jurisdiction of the "town post," who was supposed to be jealous of the Balmaclachan partitioner on account of his having a shilling a week more pay. Thereafter Dick carried them in his hand. The "town post" was a tailor, and keenly felt the deprivation of the freedom of a citizenship which two deliveries in the day implied.

"A man," he said, "canna tak' a decent drap amang his cronies till efter aught o'clock on Setterday nicht."

But it is to be said of him that he made up for his abstinence between that hour and the time that the Red Lion closed its doors at eleven. Now, the Balmachlachan post could take a drop either on his "out" or "return" journeys, and, by reclining in the bield of some contiguous hedge, sleep it off, turning up in the evening again as fresh as a daisy. These were the days when there were no vexatious restrictions as to the time in which her Majesty's servants might complete their rounds. At least, when any instructions came to the Cairn Edward post-office, or to any of the gentlemen attached to the rural delivery, such instructions were used for purposes widely different from the intentions of the Postmaster-General at St. Martins-le-Grand. Andrew Leith, the Auchenrerrick post, kept a shop on the main street of Cairn Edward, and supplied groceries to the public on the way. He invariably kept a stock of "Instructions to Rural Postmen" in the bottom of his cart. The paper of the Depart-

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ment is sound and good, and admirably adapted for wrapping butter in. It gave great satisfaction. It was generally observed that the letters of those who patronized the van of the rival dealer were never delivered at all. Andrew was understood to have made this arrangement with the authorities.

But "Hirple Dick" had no gig, neither had he a shop. He had got the job because, if he had not got it, he would have been chargeable on the rates of the parish; so all the inhabitants petitioned for him, and he was appointed. He showed all the letters to each man, woman, and child along the road, and told who they were for, who they came from, and what they were about. This may have had something to do with his late arrival at Balmaclachan and Whinnyliggate. Had post-cards been then invented he would never have arrived at all. The Cairn Edward "town" post had often hinted to the postmaster that he ought to report "Hirple Dick," but as "Dick" was careful to take all his groceries from the postmaster's first cousin, that official did not see his way to interfere.

When "Hirple Dick" went to Whinnyliggate, he passed on his way back the end of the road which led to the farm of Nether Neuk. Nance Chrystie often came to see him. She had a large correspondence; that is to say, her ingoing mail was often heavy, though her outgoing was usually small. Especially after a singing school or other rural festival, the young men of two parishes vied in sending her gloves and verses of the "I love thee, O, I love thee" type. It was also about this time that the editor of the Cairn Edward newspaper had to

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close his columns to "Original Poetry." Nance talked a great deal to "Hirple Dick," and the "lamiter" was by no means insensible to the glamor of her eyes. He thought there was "no' the like o' her in the parish." He told her as long as she would listen of the letters that he was carrying. Among other things he told her of the many curious letters of the foreign-like gentleman that had been in the neighborhood for some time. Dick thought he was a "surveyor" or "stoneknapper," as the members of the geological survey were called. Dick had his own opinion about such gentry, and it may be embodied in an incident

One of them, since become a distinguished professor, had undertaken to explain to Dick, with whom he foregathered on the road, the whole wonderful history of the world. Dick listened, apparently fascinated and attentive. Some time after a landowner in the neighborhood met the geologist in Edinburgh.

"You were down in our quarter the other day," he said; "why did you not call upon me?"

"Oh, I only came one day and went back the next. But how did you know of it?" asked the geologist, astonished.

"You spoke to our post, a lame man—"

"A most intelligent man!" said the man of science.

"Would you like to know what he said about ye? Well, he said that ye telled him all about the way the world was made, and all about the hills—"

"Yes, he seemed much interested, so I did talk to him more than one usually does to a rustic."

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"No doubt of that, for he said that ye were a very decent fellow, but, *eh—what a leear!*"

Therefore, this foreign-looking man, appearing from nowhere in particular, to receive his curiously shaped foreign envelopes, addressed to the care of "Mr. Bean, near Nether Neuk," did not excite any great suspicion. But Nance had the curiosity of her sex, and when her friend, the post, passed over the daily correspondence to her to select her own, a favor he did not grant to every one, she found one day a letter with its thin foreign envelope form, and some words showing through which interested her vastly. Next afternoon she came down to the loaning foot with some of her own correspondence. She seldom committed a word of her own to paper, but she had a pleasant habit of returning the letters and unsolicited testimonials of her admirers, having previously carefully mixed the directions, so that no man ever got his own, but each was instructed in the sentiments and generosity of his rivals. This would have destroyed the chances of any other girl, but it only enhanced the prestige of Miss Nancy Chrystie.

The next day Nance appeared at a turn of the road where the road wound past the most retired part of the Hanging Shaw. Here she was joined by the "Hoolet" and the "Deil," who carried out her commands with an instantaneousness which did credit to her powers of drilling raw material.

The four set about some strange performances. On the edge of the road the "Deil" compacted a square of beautiful sand, which he divided into smaller rectangles, and covered each of these

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smaller squares with black earth and yellow sand alternately till he had made a smooth and beautiful "dam-brod" or checker board for draughts. While the "Deil" was occupied with this, the "Hoolet" was kindling a fire and displaying a tin kettle and teapot. All this was common enough in the afternoons, for then Nance Chrystie was understood to run wild—Peter, her father, having "no control over her."

Presently the post came along. He had been longer than usual at Balmaclachan, and it was past noon when he came crawling round the corner, bent nearly double. At the distance of a few hundred yards "Hirple Dick" looked much more like a quadruped than a human being. But this was because you could not look into his heart, which was eminently human. Nance knew that Dick could not resist a cup of tea and a game at the draughts. So, when he came along, she invited him to wait and have a cup, at the same time saying:

"The 'Deil' says he can gie ye twa men an' beat ye at the dams!"

"Hirple Dick" sat down, removed his hat and the great, limp, nearly empty bag which contained the return mail, and started to his game with the "Deil"; for that youth, who could neither read nor write, had developed a phenomenal power of assault at the "poor man's chess." Indeed, the "Deil's" left hand against his right was about the only equal battle that he could get in the parish. Nance and the "Hoolet" superintended the cookery. "Hirple Dick" dropped his head lower and lower, his chin set deep in the hollow of his hand and his elbow on

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his knee. Nance removed the bag a little to the rear, in order to be out of his way, and passed any of the contents which struck her as suspicious to the "Hoolet". To do her justice, it was only the "Survey" man's correspondence which she treated in this fashion. The "Hoolet" knowingly steamed the unsealed envelopes over the flap, and when the upper cover was sealed she loosened the mucilage of the lower flap, and opened the letter without interfering with the upper seal. Having done this, she passed them back to Nance, who glanced rapidly over the written pages, closed the envelope, and in a few seconds her Majesty's mails reposed intact in their bag.

But Nance did not return one letter, which was addressed to the "Procurator Fiscal, Kirkcudbright." This she retained in order to give it to Sawny Bean, whom it directly concerned. It was about this letter that Herbert Peyton was now to hear from Sawny's own lips, when in the cave he removed the gag from his mouth.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SAWNY BEAN SETTLES HIS ACCOUNT.

A SOMBRE light sifted between the wattled hurdles of the door on Sawny Bean's prisoner. Sawny himself stood reflectively over him, after he had removed the gag from his mouth. There was a luminous obscurity in the cave, and the two men

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could scan one another without difficulty. The spy's black eyes glittered under his eyelashes like the points of light in the head of a venemous reptile. He lay on the sand, trussed like a bale of goods, motionless and powerless, with nothing living about him but the sparks of fire which glowed, self-luminous, like the eyes of a beast of prey. To him Sawny Bean appeared in no hurry to address himself. He stood regarding his sometime ally with a sort of curious unconcern, turned him over again casually with the point of his toe, as one might turn over a dead snake, and then sat down beside him on a bank of sand. Herbert Peyton said nothing for some moments after being relieved of the gag. His mouth twitched and the muscles of his throat worked convulsively.

"Well, Bean," he said at last, "perhaps you will tell me the meaning of all this?"

Sawny said nothing in reply, but slowly drew out of the pocket of his tarry corduroys a shoemaker's knife with a curved blade and a short handle wrapped round with resined twine. Slowly elevating one great foot upon its opposing knee he began to whet the edge with a slow earnestness which was not unimpressive.

"Did I not pay you well enough?" continued the spy, turning his head aside to watch the process of sharpening with some interest. "Did you ask me for anything that I did not give you? You promised readily enough to get rid of the brat for me, and you were paid all your agreement and more. I used you as well as ever a man could use another, and now you turn against me, when we

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could have rid ourselves of mother and son at once."

He paused to mark the effect of his words. Sawny drew the shoemaker's knife back and forward with a caressing movement, as though he loved it, or was enamored of the purpose for which he was preparing it. But he said nothing. Herbert Peyton tried again.

"You needn't think," he said, "that they'll give you anything for selling me, or for helping them to get the brat back. I know very well that it was the old man at Deeside that put them up to the secret; but if you'll stand by me even yet you and I will share the whole estate of Deeside. What would you think of that—eh, Bean, man? I've a sure hold on the property if the brat were out of the way. We can do it yet, if you have got any of the spirit of a man in you."

Sawny Bean had never paused pulling the knife to and fro over the soft leather of his brogues. Sometimes he held his hand a moment for the purpose of applying a natural emollient. He now tried the edge upon the back of his hairy hand, and mowed down the bristles with it as one might do with a keen razor. He put it also to a piece of half-tanned hide which had formed the binding thong of one of his temporary prisoners, long defunct. The tough hide ran before the cutting edge noiselessly. The eyes of the bound man followed it in a fascinated sort of way.

Have you nothing to say, Bean? You are within reach of a fortune, and you hesitate. You're not going to turn coward and traitor both?"

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For the first time Sawny turned his sullen eyes on his captive. They were full of a dogged intention, so pitiless and savage that the more dangerous animal quailed before the grim ferocity of the inferior savage.

Sawny began a search through the various openings—half ventilators, half pockets—which yawned at irregular intervals in his garments, and after extricating such commonplaces as tobacco, wire "grins," a wooden otter for forbidden fishing out of their depths, he drew out a dirty scrap of paper, in which there remained the semblance of a letter which had once been intended for the post-office. Sawny's clumsy fingers fumbled a while in trying to withdraw the contents from their cover, but, finding that he could not do so, he took the knife, and deftly sliced off the front of the envelope. Having laid this down he unfolded the letter, held it upside down, and looked it over with a profoundly satisfied and knowing air.

Following the lines with his finger, a method of study which explained the grimy condition of the whole, he began slowly to read, like a schoolboy who recites without comprehension a lesson learned by rote:

"To the Procurator Fiscal.

"Dear Sir:—This is to give you notice that the boy, Walter Anderson, lost since last Friday from the farm of Drumquhat, was carried away and murdered by Sawny Bean who lives at the Hanging Shaw. His body may be found by digging straight

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in from the fourth hole from the corner of Bean's house. A FRIEND."

Herbert Peyton had lain motionless during the reading of this communication, nor did he say a single word of expostulation or defence when Sawny Bean finished. So the reader suddenly thrust the paper within an inch of his prisoner's face, and said :

"Read it yersel'—see gin that's no' a' richt. The 'Hoolet's' a graun' scholar. What hae ye to say to that?" he added, energetically, bringing the writing in contact with the motionless and mask-like face. "Hae ye ony faut to find wi' that?"

"I know nothing about it," at last said the prisoner.

"That," remarked Sawny, indifferently, "is a lee."

Then there was a great silence for some minutes, only broken by distant cries, which meant that the "Hoolet" and the "Deil" were having one of their eternal squabbles.

"Noo," said Sawny Bean, calmly, "I'm gaun to cut your throat!"

As he spoke he laid the keen edge of the shoemaker's knife against the bare throat of the prisoner, who winced, and tried to turn his head to the side, then drew it away again as though not perfectly satisfied with its edge. He tried it on the side of his boot again and finally tested it on the back of his hand.

"Are you ready?" he said.

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The victim did not betray any remarkable eagerness.

"Maybe," continued Sawny Bean, thoughtfully, "ye wad like to ken that ye'll be clean covered up wi' guid dry sand. They say it makes the maist comfortable o' graves. Mair nor that, the feck o folks graves are juist six feet deep— yours'll be sixty at the least. But I'm no' gaun to hang for ye, my man, as ye wad hae garred me do for the bairn. Na, ye'll get a fine easy daith, an' be na trouble to yersel' or to onybody else as lang as ye leeve."

There was a pattering sound at the wattled door. Sawny turned. It was the "Deil," who looked curiously through at his father.

"The auld, white heided man frae the Big Hoose o' Deeside is here, an' twa men wi' him," said the "Deil."

Sawny Bean rose, and replaced the gag in his prisoner's mouth.

"Keep your mind easy," he said; "I'm coming back."

When Sawny turned the corner of the great sandbank of the Hanging Shaw, he came suddenly upon his visitors—Mr. Durand and two other men who had come with him. They were tall, dark men, singularly like one another, with sallow complexions and dark hair. They were looking curiously about them, with the air of men who have arrived at some locality familiar to them by description. They stood mentally checking off the features which they recognized.

The old man came forward with his habitual gentle courtesy. He offered his hand to Sawny

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Bean, who took it as though it were some curiosity, and then let it drop suddenly.

"These gentlemen," he said, "have come all the way from France for your prisoner. You can give him up to them without fear—I assure you they will take exceedingly good care of him."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE GALLOWAY HERD "LOOKS HIS SHEEP."

After the abrupt disappearance of the French spy under the escort of Felix Durand's two friends, a great peace settled down upon the farms and villages round the Dee Water. It was the height of the haytime, and there was the glory of the summer on all the pastures. The hill sheep were little trouble now. Indeed, the minds of the workers were on other things. At the farm of Drumquhat, where Walter Anderson was busy learning his trade under the supervision of Aleck M'Quhirr, they were allowed to follow their winding ways along the face of the braes and among the heather-hidden crags, cropping the young shoots and the tender hidden grasses at their own placid wills, from the time when the dew was on the grass and the sunlight came chill from the east till the hour of the sleep of men. Sheep never sleep in the sense in which other animals do. At any hour in the short summer nights you can hear them munching and cropping,

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lying down to eat all within their reach, ruminating for a little, and then moving on to pastures new.

Walter Anderson went with Aleck one morning to "look the hill"—that is, to count the sheep on the undulating moorland which stretched away to the south across the wilderness of peat-hag and bog, towards the Range of the Kells on the one hand and the fertile straths which contributed to the Dee on the other. Walter now slept "in the laft," under the airy spaces of the unceiled garret with his uncles, to the undisguised sorrow of his mother, but to his own delight as being at last emancipated from boyhood and now at last become a real Galloway herd.

Therefore, when Aleck was ready to go to the hill, the clock had not yet struck five. This meant that the morning had not yet really touched a quarter past four, for in these parts the housewife who does not keep her clock at least half an hour fast, and so snatch an earlier meed of labor from herself and her assistants, is held to be unthrifty and careless of the precious hours. The theory of this is that if you can get your folk betimes to work in the morning, they will see to getting to bed in time themselves. Sometimes the clock in south country farm kitchens is as much as an hour and a quarter fast, which is stimulating to the practice of mental arithmetic, but is not supposed to be really so effective as three-quarters of an hour, which commends itself to most mistresses as the golden mean between hard driving and unduly permitted sluggishness.

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If the inhabitants of the farm were not early astir at Drumquhat, the active mistress would be round with an inquiry. Mary M'Quhirr would have no loiterers among the workers for whom she was responsible.

"Good mornin'! Are ye weel this mornin'?"

"Ay; I'm no' that ill."

"Then rise! We like the beds made i' the mornin' here."

Aleck found Wattie at the foot of the stair before him. He whistled up his dogs, which came rushing from the kitchen, knocking over a three-legged stool in their unnecessary ardor. Staves in hand, the two herds took their way down the narrow, well-trodden path to the horse watering-place, then over the stile on to the hill, and in a moment more the wet heather bells were lashing about their ankles. The sun had climbed a considerable part of his long ascent up the sky, and the larks were singing and pulsating upwards as if they were the sole choristers of the joy of morning. But as the heat of the sunshine began to dry the heather and the bent, the crickets sent forth their shrill note of content, while all about the whaups and the peewits were uttering their protests against the ranging collies. The dogs went hither and thither, now hot-foot in the scent of some nocturnally wandering hare, and now sitting down with the wisest air in the world to watch the gambols of the rabbits along the woodside, aware that the slightest advance would send them all vanishing to their holes.

Wattie frolicked along, becoming grave and staid only when he remembered for a moment that he

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was "second herd," and talked about the cave and the "Hoolet" and the "Deil" to Aleck. That young man tramped along, keeping a keen and wary eye along to where he saw the fringes of his flock crawling like white mites far up among the mottled heather. Aleck answered in an absent-minded way until Wattie, with the instinct of the young for a pleasing topic, began to tell him what the "Hoolet" had said of Nance Chrystie. Then Aleck took interest enough. Indeed, Wattie generally talked about nothing else when he was out with Aleck. When he and Archie Grierson went for a walk, he knew that he must talk about his mother if he were to be treated like a grown-up man. So clear-eyed is youth on matters which troubles older heads to unravel.

Now the herds were coming upon the lower skirts of the sheep, it was the work of a few moments to send the dogs aloft to the right and left. The sheep did not seem disconcerted. They simply moved a little inward, and continued the steady breaking of their fast. But gradually the dogs wore them towards the centre till they were a not unequal column making its way over the moor in a direction quite opposite to the farmhouse. Aleck directed his dogs as much with gesture as with voice, being in this the opposite of his father, whose stormy vociferation bellowed across the hilltops and broke in a thunder-clap upon the collies as they ran hither and thither.

The sheep were compelled towards a "slap," the opening in two reaches of dyke which formed a right angle with a bite out at the point of junction.

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At one side of the "slap" stood Aleck M'Quhirr, and at the other Wattie, both counting by "scores" as the woolly backs came thick and fast, each meek nose laid on the back of its front neighbor. Aleck could count ten or twelve score of black faces without making a mistake of one, and his assistant has retained to this day the habit of counting by twenties which he was taught on the Galloway moors.

When the press had passed, and the flock, issuing out of the narrow gullet through which it had been strained, had opened out and scattered along the many worn sheep-tracks for the enjoyment of other twelve hours' uninterrupted liberty, Walter and his friend continued their upward journey along the march-dyke, where they encountered Rab Affleck, the very indolent "herd" of Peter Chrystie, the farmer of Nether Neuk.

He was sitting on the dyke, smoking the most meditative of pipes, and gazing down at the farm to the master of which he owned allegiance.

"Good-morning, Rab," said Aleck M'Quhirr, from his own side of the stone dyke.

"Ay, Aleck," replied Rab, politely, without moving an inch.

As for Wattie, he went off with the dogs on a quest after rabbits, chasing any of these animals that might be about into the march-dykes, in which he instantly began to burrow, pulling out stones, to the destruction of the stability of the structure. Aleck and the indolent giant remained alone in conversation. Rab, indeed, had never taken his eyes off the farmhouse of Nether Neuk.

"What may ye be lookin' at, Rab?" asked Aleck.

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"I'm juist wondering what yon red cloot may be for that Nance Chrystie has hinging oot o' her room window."

Had Rab's eyes been lifted for a moment to the ingenuous cheeks of his brother herd across the dyke, he would have seen another red signal fluttering out at his words, but he was content to go on smoking. Well did Aleck know the meaning of the signal in the window of the third room round the corner, for the pleasure of looking at which he came every morning two miles out of his way. Aleck was no great artist, but he had with prodigious labor drawn a Chinese-looking elevation of the houses of Nether Neuk, as like as possible to the one which he had seen the masons use when they came to build the porch at Drumquhat, and to break the new front door through the wall. Drawing was looked upon as the very idlest of all occupations at Drumquhat, and an artist was no better considered than one manifestly afflicted by the Almighty, who had withdrawn from him his due proportion of brains.

It was a Whinnyliggate man standing in a field who called over to another who was complacently examining the work of a busy open-air painter over the artist's shoulder :

"Man, Tam, what's the craitur doing ?"

To which the critic, strong in his facts, responded readily :

"Drawin' wi' pent !"

"Is't bonny ?" continued the inquirer in the turnip field.

"Na ; ocht but bonny !"

But Aleck cherished his sketch as more beautiful

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than a whole academy of design. He had labored at it. He had made it all himself, and there was on it a picture of the house in which his beloved Nance had her being, the room in which she took her meals, and that in which she slept. He had never dared to show the work of art to Nance. He feared the burst of laughter which would have undoubtedly followed.

Aleck had cause, therefore, to know that window in which the red ensign was set. He knew also its meaning in Nance's code of signals; for that lively young woman could do nothing without elaborate mystery, and much parade of the imagination. He was to meet her that night at the old trysting place by the Hanging Shaw, and his heart went thumping quick time at the thought. Just then a lilac dress and a sun bonnet passed across the open space of the farmyard, swinging a bright milk-can in the hand of the wearer. The figure stood for a moment as though looking towards the side of the hill. Aleck sprang upon the march-dyke his full height, regardless of the presence of Rab Affleck, who puffed stolidly at his pipe as if he did not know that his master was seeking him distractedly over half the farm. The young man snatched the cap from his head, and twirled it wildly on his shepherd staff.

Rab Affleck seated on his dyke, smiled grimly, took his pipe out of his mouth, and said:

"That's Jess Muirhead, the byre lass. She wull be pleased!"

Aleck dropped from his wall as if he had been shot.

"I'll crack yer croon till ye, Rab Affleck—" he

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was beginning belligerently; when, soughing up from the hollow, the light wind brought the echo of a far-away voice:

"Saw ye ocht o' Rab An'erson, lazy taed? Saw ye ocht o' Rab An'erson, lazy taed?"

Aleck had a high opinion of the good qualities of the father-in-law whom he proposed for himself, but he felt that this was not the time for an interview, so he rolled over among the heather till he came to the first convenient moss hag along which he glided till he was safe in a sheltered hollow.

Just then there came a rattle and a rush of stones, and looking up cautiously, Aleck saw Wattie fleeing in company with both the dogs, pursued by a stormy voice, which said:

"Gae hame wi' ye, ye misleared vaigabond, coming pu'in' doon my mairch-dykes! Dinna let me see your face on this side o' the hill in a hurry again."

Aleck lay close as a hare in his form. He was no coward, as we know, but he congratulated himself that Peter Chrystie had not seen him. He wondered if he knew anything about the red handkerchief in Nance's window. He never once wondered about Rab Anderson or thought what had happened to him. What is more, he did not care. Rab Anderson and his master could settle their own quarrels as they had often done before.

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE MINISTER'S VISITATION.

THE sun was glinting slantwise over the undulating uplands to the east, and Ben Gairn was blushing a rosy purple, purer and fainter than the flamboyant hues of sunset, when the Rev. Richard Cameron looked out of his bedroom window in the little whitewashed manse of Cairn Edward. His own favorite blackbird had awakened him, and he lay for a long while listening to its mellow fluting, till his conscience reproached him for lying so long abed on such a morning. Richard Cameron was by nature an early riser, a gift to thank God for. Many a Sabbath morning he had seen the sun rise from the ivy-grown arbor in the secluded garden behind the old whitewashed kirk. It was his habit to rise early, and with the notes of his sermon in his hand to memorize, or "mandate" them, as it was called, so that on Sabbath when the hillfolk gathered calm and slow there might be no hesitation, and that he might be able to pray the Cameronian supplication, "And bring the truth premeditated to ready recollection"—a prayer which no mere "reader" of a discourse would ever dare to utter. But this was not a morning for "mandating" with the minister. It was the day of his pastoral visitation, and it behoved one who had a congregation scattered over a radius of more than twenty miles to be up and doing. The minister went

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down into the little study to have his spare breakfast of porridge and milk, and then, having called his housekeeper in for prayers—which included, even to that sparse auditory, the exposition of the chapter read—he took his staff in hand, and, crossing the main street, he took the road for the western hills, where a considerable portion of his flock resided.

As he went he whistled, whenever he found himself at a sufficient distance from the scattered houses which lined the roads. He was everywhere most respectfully greeted with an instinctive solemnity of a godly sort—a solemnity without fear. Men looked after him as he swung along, with respect for his character and work. They knew him to be at once a man among men and a man of God. The women stood and looked longer after him. There was nothing so striking as that clear-cut, clean-shaven Greek face set on the square-shoulders, to be seen in Galloway, which is a country of tall, stoop-shouldered men—a country also at that time of shaven upper lips and bristling beards, the most unpicturesque fashion, barring the mutton-chop whisker, which has yet been discovered. The women, therefore, old and young, looked after him with a warmth about their hearts and a kindly moisture in their eyes. They felt that he was much too handsome to be going about unprotected.

Notwithstanding that the minister had a greeting for all, his limbs were of such excellent reach and moved so fast over the ground that his pace was rather over than under four miles an hour. Passing the thirteen chimneys of the "Lang Raw" he

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crossed the bridge and bent his way to the right along the wide spaces of the sluggish river. The old fortress of the Douglases, the castle of Thrieve, loomed up behind him through the wavering heat of the morning. Above him was the hill of Knock-cannon, from which Mons Meg fired her fatal shots. The young minister stood looking back and revolving the strange changes of the past. He saw how the way of the humble was exalted, and the lofty brought down from their seats.

"Some put their trust in horses, and some in chariots," said the minister, "but we will trust in the Lord."

He spake half aloud.

"As ye war sayin', sir, we wull trust the Lord—Himsel' wull be oor strength and stay."

The minister turned. It was a middle-aged man who spoke—David M'Kie, the familiar good spirit of the village of Whinnyliggate and the whole parish. Wherever sickness was, there David was to be found.

"I was thinking," said the minister, "that it is not the high and lofty ones who sit most securely on their seats. The Lord is on the side of the quiet folk who only wait. The mighty may take the eye with their bravery, but the victory is with those who wear the homespun."

"Ay, minister," said David M'Kie, tentatively.

It was worth while coming five miles out of his road to hear the minister's words. There was not a man who would have a word to say but himself in the smiddy of Whinnyliggate that night—not even the smith himself.

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"Yes, David, it was grand, no doubt, to hear 'Up wi' the Bonnets o' Bonny Dundee"—Claverhouse clattering down the Lawnmarket and turning the West Port like a whirlwind with all his tartans fluttering, but it was the Westland Levies with their scythes and their Bibles that won the day in the hinderend. King Charles and his men were a bonny sicht, with their lace collars and their floating lovelocks, but the drab-coats beat him out of the field, because the Lord was on their side."

The two men were now on the final rise of the hillside. The whole valley of the Dee lay beneath them, rich with trees and pasture lands, with waving crops and the mansions of the great. The minister shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked beneath the sun. He pointed with his finger to Thrieve, whose tall keep glimmered up from its island amid the mists of the river.

"There is the castle where the proud once dwelt and looked to dwell forever, having no fear of God or man. The hanging stone is there that never wanted its tassel, the courtyard where was the ready block, the dungeon for the captive, the banquet-hall and the Earl's chamber. They are all there, yet only the owl and the bat dwell there forever."

"I heard a bit poem that a laddie in oor pairt o' the country made on that auld castle," said David M'Kie, "an' him no' ten year auld yet! I canna mind it a', but I wad like to gie ye a screed o' the first verse gin I can mind as muckle o't:

"'Oh, thou castle, old and hoary,
Gone is all thy pomp and glory,

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Now no more the Douglas name
Sounds upon the trump of fame!
There thou standest ever lonely,
With the waves and wildfowl only.'"

"But a boy of ten never made that!" cried the minister, stopping in his astonishment.

"Ay, did he, though, an' plenty mair, only I canna mind o' mair noo," said David M'Kie, rejoicing that he had been able to astonish the minister.

"And who, pray, is the boy? I would like to see him."

"'Deed, minister, gin ye're gaun up to Drumquhat the day, as I jalouse ye are, ye may see him. It's the boy that was lost. Ye may hae heard o' him. They ca' him Walter Anderson. He's some sib to the mistress, I'm thinkin'."

"Yes, I have seen him in church, but I never had speech with the lad," said the minister.

"Na, I can weel believe that. The boy's no' partial like to ministers, ye'll excuse me for sayin', ever since he fell oot wi' the Free kirk minister's loon, and staned him off the Drumquhat grund. Saunders lickit him for that, an' so he tak's the road if a minister looks near; but gin ye come on him afore he can make for the Hanging Shaw ye may get speech o' him, and may be the means o' doing him a heap o' guid."

At this point the ways parted. The minister held on up the valley of the Ken, curving over the moorland towards the farm of Drumquhat. He went more leisurely now that he had broken the back of his morning's walk. The larks sprang upward, and

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their songs were the expression of an innocent gladness like that which filled his own heart.

He climbed the high stone dykes as they came, sometimes crossing his legs and sitting a while on the top with a sort of boyish freedom in his heart as though he were off for a holiday—a feeling born in part of the breezy uplands and the wide spaces of the sky. On his right hand was the dark mass of the Hanging Shaw, where it began to feather down to the Black Water, which rushed along in the shadow to meet the broad and equable waters of the Ken.

As the minister came to one of these dykes, treading softly on a noiseless cushion of heather and moss, he put his foot on a projecting stone and vaulted over with one hand lightly laid on the top stone. He fell with a sudden leap of the heart, for he had nearly leapt on the top of a boy, who lay prone on his face, deeply studying a book. The boy sprang up, startled by the minister's unexpected entrance into his wide world of air, empty of all but the moor birds' cries.

For a few moments they stood staring at each other—tall and well-attired minister and rough-coated herd-boy.

"You are diligent," at last said the minister, looking out of his dark eyes into the blue, wondering orbs which met his so squarely and honestly. "What is that you are reading?"

"Shakespeare, sir," said the boy, not without some fear in telling the minister that he was reading the works of him who was known among many of the Cameronians as "the greatest of the play-actors."

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But the minister was placable and interested. He recognized the face as that of the boy who came to church on various occasions, but with whom he had found it so difficult to come to speech.

"How many plays of Shakespeare have you read?" queried the minister again.

"Them a'—mony a time," said the boy.

The minister marvelled still more. "But ye'll no' tell my gran'mither?" said the boy, beseechingly, putting the minister upon his honor.

Mr. Cameron hesitated for a moment and then said:

"I will not tell your grandmother unless you are doing something worse than reading Shakespeare, my boy. You are from Drumquhat, I think," he continued. "What are you doing here?"

The boy blushed and hung his head.

"Cutting thistles," he said.

The minister laughed, and looked about. On one hand there was a mown swathe of thistles, on the other they still grew luxuriantly all down the slope to the burnside.

"I suppose you are cutting down the thistles in Shakespeare? There are a good many of them," he said; "but is that what your master keeps you for?"

The boy looked up quickly at this imputation on his honesty.

"I'm on piecework," he said with a kind of defiance in his tone.

"On piecework?" asked the minister, perplexed; "how is that?"

"Weel, sir, it's this way, ye see. Gran'faither

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used to pay me a penny an hour for cuttin' the thistles, and he did that till he said I was the slowest worker ever he had, an' that by the time that I was done wi' yae side o' the field the ither was ready to begin ower again. I said that I was quite willin' to begin again, but he said that to sit doon wi' a book and cut as far roon ye as the hook could reach was not the kind o' wark that he had been accustomed to on the farm o' Drumquhat. So he took me off working by time and put me on piece-wark. I dinna get as muckle siller, but I like it juist as weel."

"Does the field get done any quicker?" asked the minister.

"Ay," said the boy, in whom we recognize our own Walter; "I read half an hour an' I work half an hour."

"But how do you know how the time goes?" asked the minister, for watches were not at that date to be found in the pockets of herd-boys on the Galloway hills.

The boy pointed to a peeled willow wand which was stuck in the ground with a rough circle drawn round it.

"I made that sun-dial; Rab Affleck showed me," he said, simply, without any pride.

"And are ye sure that the working half-hour is always the same length as the reading time?" asked the minister.

Walter looked up with a bright twinkle in his eye.

"Whiles when I'm workin' at the thistles it may get a bit kick forrit," he said.

The minister laughed a low, mellow laugh—a

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laugh which did one good to hear. Then he quoted a text:

"'And Hezekiah said, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees in the dial of Ahaz.'"

The minister and Walter sat for a long time in the heat of the noon-day regarding one another with undisguisedly innocent interest. They were in the midst of a great plain of moorland over which a haze of heat hung like a diaphanous veil. Over the edge there appeared, like a plain of blue mist, the strath, with the whitewashed farmhouses glimmering up like patches of snow on a March hillside. The minister came down from the dyke and sat beside the boy on the heather clumps.

"You are a herd, you tell me. Well, so am I—I am a shepherd of men, though unworthy of such a charge," he said.

Walter looked for further light.

"Did you ever hear," continued Mr. Cameron, "of One who went about, almost barefoot like you, over the rocky roads and up and down the hillsides. He called Himself the Good Shepherd, and He looked after the very worst men as well as the best. Have you heard of Him?"

"That was Jesus," said Walter, reverently.

"Yes, it was Jesus," continued the minister. "Would you not like to be a herd like Him, and look after men and not sheep?"

"Sheep need to be lookit after, too," said Walter.

The minister smiled at the boy's answer, but he was set on planting a seed in his heart, so he continued:

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"But sheep have no souls to be saved!"

"Dowgs hae!" asserted Walter, stoutly.

"What makes you say so?" said the minister.

"Because, if my dog Royal hasna, there's a heap o' fowk gangs to the kirk withoot!"

"What does Royal do that makes you think that he has a soul?" asked the minister.

"Weel, for yae thing, he gangs to the kirk every Sabbath, and lies in the passage, an' he'll no that muckle as snack at a flee that lichts on his nose, a thing he's verra fond o' on a week day. An' if it's no yersel' that's preachin', my granfather says that he'll rise an' gang oot till the sermon's by."

The minister felt the compliment, but being a modest man he was unable to say anything.

"And mair nor that, he disna like repeating tunes," said Walter, who though a boy knew the names of every tune in the psalmody, that being one of the books which could with safety be looked at under the bookboard when the minister was laying down his "fifthly", and when some one had put leaden clogs on the hands of the little yellow-faced clock in the front of the gallery—a clock which in the pauses of the sermon could be heard distinctly with a staidness and devotion to the matter in hand which was quite Cameronian.

"Repeating tunes!" said the minister, with a certain painful recollection of a storm in his session on the Thursday after the precentor had set up "Artaxerxes" in front of him and sung it as a solo without a single member of the congregation daring to join.

"Ay," said Walter, "Royal disna haud wi' re-

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peats. He yowls like fun, but 'Kilmarnock' and 'Martyrs' fit him fine. He thumps the passage boards with his tail near as loud's ye do the Bible yersel'. Mair than that, Royal gangs for the kye every nicht himsel'. A' that ye hae to say is just 'Kye, Royal, gae fetch them!' an' he's aff like a shot."

"How does he open the gates?" queried the minister.

"He lifts the bars wi' his nose, but he canna sneck them ahint him when he comes back."

"Ay an' you think that he has a soul," said the minister, to draw the boy out.

"What think ye yersel', sir?" said Walter, who at bottom was a Scot, and could answer one question by asking another.

"Well," answered the minister, "the Bible tells us nothing of the future of the beasts that perish—"

"'Who knoweth,'" said Walter, "'the soul of the beast, whether it goeth upward or whether it goeth downward to the ground.'"

"You know your Bible as well as your Shakespeare, I am glad to see. Keep reading it, and it will make you wise unto everlasting life. But read most about Jesus, who came to seek and save the sheep that are lost."

"Do ye think that He could save Sawny Bean and the 'Hoolet' and the 'Deil'?" queried Walter, sitting upon a bunch of bent, his eye brightening.

"It was just the like of them that He loved to speak to and be among."

The minister rose to go on his way. He shaded

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his eyes with his hand, and looked towards Drumquhat. The boy's eyes followed him.

He said: "Do you think that I could ever be a herd of men, a herd like Jesus?"

"You could follow Him. That is all that any of us can do, and we make a poor enough fist even of that!" said the minister, lifting his hat and letting the breath of air that blew irregularly from side to side of the moor on that still, sultry day, lift his long, dark hair. "You could follow Him. He loveth such to follow Him. Of such is the kingdom."

So saying he took his way over the moor, crossing the wide peat hags and the deep trenches from which the neighboring farmers of bygone generations had cut the peat for their winter fires. He went with a long, swinging step very light and swift, springing from *tussock* to *tussock* of dried brown bent in the marshy places.

Following the trend of the moor he followed one of the roads for leading carts off and on the *peatflowe*, till he came to a narrow lane which led downward to the cultivated fields around the farmhouse. He vaulted the gate without opening it, and found himself almost immediately in front of Nelly Anderson and Felix Durand, who were walking along this whin-encircled loaning. The old man was leaning paternally on the young woman's arm. Felix took off his hat to the minister with the instinctive politeness of an elder time, and Mr. Cameron blushed crimson, half at the salutation, and half at having been caught jumping over a gate like a schoolboy just out of school.

"Come away, Mr. Cameron," said the old man,

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who knew the minister very well, and had for him the respect of one true man for another, "I shall be glad if you will help me to persuade this obstinate young lady that she must obey her elders and put herelf a little about for the good of her future and for her son."

The minister stopped perplexed. Nelly Anderson stood looking at him with a smile in her violet eyes, and he was ready to give the case even prolonged consideration.

"We have all been wanting her to go with me to Paris. There are things connected with her affairs there which need her instant attention, and though I have done my best, it is necessary now that Mrs. Anderson herself should come. There are clouds, too, on the horizon, and no one knows when they may break. I wish the business were well over, and she back in the quiet of Drumquhat."

"Mrs. Anderson will, I am sure, do what is right in the matter," said the minister, cautiously, waiting for Nelly to speak.

"I feel reluctant to leave the good and kind friends at Drumquhat, who have sheltered me for so many years," said Nelly, "but if it is for the best I will go."

Felix Durand patted the arm on which his hand rested.

"Spoken like my own brave girl," he said. "We shall all see Paris together."

"I met your son," he said to Nelly. "He is a wonderful boy. One day he may be an honor and a joy to you."

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Nelly Anderson smiled. She always knew that Mr. Cameron was a man of singular insight.

"Walter takes after his father," she said.

The eye of the minister caught a quick indication of dissent in the instinctive movement of Nelly's companion.

"*Le bon Dieu défend!*" was what Felix said under his breath, but outwardly he said nothing.

So with a word or two of farewell the minister passed on his way, and at the great barn-door he came upon Saunders M'Quhirr, master of the farm of Drumquhat, whose welcome to his minister it was worth coming a hundred miles to receive.

"Come awa',Maister Cameron, and the mistress will get you a drink o' milk, an' ye'll hae a bite o' denner wi' us gin ye can bide half an hour!"

The minister went in and surprised the mistress in the midst of the clean and comely mysteries of the dairy. From her likewise he received the warmest of welcomes. The relation of minister and people in Galloway, specially among the poorer congregations who have to work hard to support their minister, is a very beautiful one. He is their superior in every respect, their oracle, their model, their favorite subject of conversation, yet in a special measure he is their property, though not in any way that interferes with his freedom of action or independence of thought. Saunders and Mary M'Quhirr would as soon have contradicted the Confession of Faith as questioned any opinion of the minister's, when he spoke on his own subjects.

On rotation of crops and specially on "nowt" beasts his opinion was "no' worth a preen." It

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would not have been becoming in him to have a good judgment on the secularities.

He had not been long seated in the clean stone-floored kitchen with the bacon hams swinging to the ceiling, before Mary M'Quhirr opened the subject that was near her heart.

"Maister Durand, the auld man frae the big Hoose o' Deeside, is awfu' set on Wattie and his mither's gaun awa' ower to Payris wi' him. Saunders an' me dinna ken what to mak' o't ava!"

Why not leave Aleck in the farm and go over and see it for yourself!" said the minister.

"Hear till him," cried Mrs. M'Quhirr, "is he no' the verra prophet o' the Almichty, takkin' the words oot o' oor mouths. That was the verra identical that I was proposin' to my man. What is an auld man, a woman body an' a boy in the middle o' a' that wickedness. My certie, but we canna let them gang awa' by themsel'. They are juist like oorsel's noo, an' that boy comes between Saunders an' his prayers!"

"Hear till her," said Saunders, "it's her that spoils him till his mither has to fleech wi' her no' to gie him a' his ain way!"

"I think you had better go," said the minister, "it is a long journey, but there's the same Lord across the water as on the farm of Drumquhat.

Saunders and Mary bowed their heads.

The family and dependents were all gathered together in the wide, cool kitchen of Drumquhat, for it was time for the minister's catechising. Saunders sat with his wife beside him, the three sons,

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Aleck, James and Rab, on straight-backed chairs, Walter with his hand on his grandmother's lap; while a little apart, sympathetic yet tacitly excused from participating in the ordeal, sat Nelly Anderson and her venerable friend, Felix. Question and answer from the Shorter Catechism passed from lip to lip like a well-played game in which no one let the ball drop. It would have been thought as shameful if the minister had not acquitted himself at "asking" the questions deftly and instantaneously as for one of those who were answering to fail in their replies. When Rab momentarily mislaid the "Reasons Annexed" to the second commandment, and his reason reeled in the sudden terror that they had gone from him forever, his father looked at him as one who would say, "Woe is me that I have been the means of bringing a fool into the world!" But his mother looked at him wistfully, in a way that was like cold water running down his back, while Mr. Cameron said kindly:

"Take your time!"

Rab recovered himself gallantly, reeled off the Reasons Annexed with vigor, and promised under his breath a sound thrashing to his model brother, James, who having known the Catechism perfectly from his youth up, had yet refused to give a leading hint to his brother in his extremity. Walter had his answers as ready as any of them. It was his granny's Sabbath duty to see that he did not disgrace himself during the week at Whinnyliggate school.

Walter had on one occasion begun to attend a Sabbath school over at the village, which was started

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by the enthusiastic assistant of the parish minister, whose church lay some miles over the moor. He had not asked any permission of his seniors at the farm, but had wandered off by himself to be present at the strange ceremonies. There the Drumquhat training had made him easily first of those who repeated psalms and said their Catechism. A distinguished career seemed to be opening out before him, but a sad event happened which abruptly closed the school. The minister of the parish heard what his young "helper" had been doing over in Whinnyliggate, and he appeared in person on the following Sabbath when the exercises were in full swing. He opened the door and stood silently regarding, the stick *dithering* in both hands in a kind of senile fury.

The "helper" came forward with a bashful confidence, expecting that he would receive commendation for his great diligence. But he was the most surprised "helper" in six counties when the minister struck at him suddenly with his stick, and abruptly ordered him out of the school.

"I did not bring ye frae Edinburgh to go sneaking aboot my pairish sugarin' the bairns an' flairdyin' the auld wives. Get oot o' my sicht, an' never let your shadow darken this pairish again!"

Then he turned the children out to the green, letting some of the laggards feel his stick as they passed. Thus was closed the first Sabbath school that was ever held in the village of Whinnyliggate. The too enthusiastic "helper" passed away like a dream, and the few folk who journeyed every Sabbath from Whinnyliggate to the parish kirk by the

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side of the Dee Water received the ordinances simply at noon each Lord's Day, by being exhorted to "begin the public worship of God" in the voice which a drill sergeant uses when he teaches an awkwards quad. Walter did not bring this event before the authorities at Drumquhat. He knew that the blow of the minister's oaken staff was a judgment on him for having anything to do with an "Erastian Establishment."

After the catechising, the minister prayed. He prayed for the venerable heads of the household, that they might have wisdom and discretion; that in the younger members the fear of the Lord might overcome the lust of the eye and the pride of life; for the sojourners, that the God of journeying Israel might be a pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day before them, that their pilgrimage way might be plain; and for the young child, that he might be a Timothy in the Scriptures, a Samuel in obedience, and that in the future, if so it were the will of the Most High, he might be both witness and evangelist of the gospel.

During the minister's prayer, the silence was deep and still on that summer afternoon. The family felt that their minister was leading them into another Presence and into another country. The M'Quhirrs stood reverently with bowed heads and hands clasped, Felix sat with his hand covering his eyes and his white hair streaming over his brow, Nelly Anderson knelt by herself, while Walter compromised the matter of posture by standing with his hand on his mother's shoulder, as though at once protesting against her semi-Popish

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position at public prayer, and yet nevertheless identifying himself with it because she was his mother.

That night, when the minister had said his own prayers and committed himself to his God, his thoughts went back with a certain pleasure to the blue hearthstone of Drumquhat with the mysterious "whirlies" upon it which Mary M'Quhirr had produced with such care, and it was not the least pleasant part of his meditation that he had seen the sunlight glint on the golden hair of the woman who had not lost her girlhood by becoming Walter Anderson's mother.

CHAPTER XL.

LOVERS' TRYST.

ALECK M'QUHIRR had got his horse stabled and himself brought, as to his personal appearance, to a state of perfection such as a year ago he had not dreamt of. He was therefore exceedingly afraid of meeting his father, or, in a less degree, his brothers. His mother he did not care so much about, for she had made up her mind to the inevitable; and even mothers understand that when a man is careful about his attire for one woman's sake it is a compliment to the whole sex. On the other hand, he did not wish to meet either of his brothers; for Rab would laugh and James might follow him, and he did not wish to be troubled stopping to thrash them.

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But he was anxious that he should submit himself to the keen-eyed and sympathetic inspection of his friend, Nelly Anderson. He knew what he had gained in courtesy and readiness as well as in appearance from her influence, and he wished to let her know his purpose and whereabouts that night. He therefore went round the little pinafore of garden which was attached loosely to the front of the house, keeping under the hedge skirting the fir plantation, and finally plunging through the scanty fruit trees to find Nelly Anderson in the little summer-house under the great "gean" tree by the wall. He had seen her go there with her book. As he came near he stepped softly, for he heard a sound of weeping, the soft, continuous sobbing of a woman's tears, and the short, quick words of a man earnestly pleading.

"It cannot be—I tell you, it can never be!" said the woman's voice, punctuating the sentences with sobs.

"But I tell you that it is and shall be! Where thou goest I will go!" said the man's voice, firmly, and with a certain new masterfulness in it.

Aleck turned on his heel to pass the summer-house as though he had been going in another direction. The two within were too much occupied to notice him. But before he turned away he saw that Nelly Anderson sat with her golden hair falling over her shoulders, and beside her Archie Grierson stood, with his hands tensely clasped, his finger nails denting the backs of his hands, and a fine look of manhood new-born on his face. Aleck hardly knew his friend.

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Soon the great summer night swung overhead as Aleck went towards his own love tryst. As the light faded a golden band of lemon yellow lay along the west. Overhead Venus shone so brightly that prominent objects cast faint shadows on the white dusty road. Aleck struck over the hill in the falling dews of the night, the oat-grass and the meadow-sweet in the hollows lashing wet about his feet. He came to a standstill in the tree-sheltered hollow of his tryst. He stood against a tree with his blood running as it only runs when the heart is young, and when pure love makes the pulses leap as they will never leap again. He waited for his sweetheart. He wondered if she would be mocking or serious. If only he could get her to be serious for an hour, what a number of things he would find out. He listened, not that he hoped to hear her—for he knew her silent, elfish way—but that he might hear something besides the thunder of his own heart in his ears.

Down in the glen there was a sound of singing. It was wistful and yearning, and brought the tears to Aleck's eyes—eyes that were easily moved to-night; for smiles and tears neighbor each other behind the eyelids of those who are deeply in love.

The song rose and fell as the winds blew in fitful breaths that still night.

"The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; he leadeth me
The quiet waters by."

It was the "Hoolet" and the "Deil" singing the

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Psalm that Walter had taught them in the cave under the Hanging Shaw. Walter had helped to evangelize the house of Bean.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE MEETING.

THE plaintive strains of New St. Ann's floated up from the depths of the Hanging Shaw to Aleck's ears as he waited and listened. He stood under a clump of willows which overhung the seven-foot march dyke at the back of Nether Neuk's cornfield. The woods by the waterside lay dark and lonely beneath him, only chance vagrant airs drawing regularly to and fro across them, waving the pendent ribbon leaves of the willow over his head, airing out the wood and the pastures on its flank as a careful nurse airs a child's sleeping room. Aleck scented a whiff of acrid wood smoke blown from Sawny Bean's cabin far below, which drifted upward on the same breeze which brought the sound of singing to his ear. A dog barked across the valley, and was silenced with blows, its bold challenge sinking into a pleading whimper. A stick snapped somewhere in the woods. There was a sound of saplings and underbrush whisking together after the passage of some large body.

Aleck listened with a questioning ear. He was well aware that his Nance would not come or go

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like the stumbling ox. Others were therefore abroad to-night, and it was necessary to move with caution. Poachers or keepers, he knew not who—perhaps navvies from the railway huts at the Bennan. Soon he heard footsteps on the other side of the dyke under the shadow of which he stood. A match was struck, so near that the odor of sulphur was quite apparent. Some one lit his pipe under the old willow, so near that Aleck saw the glow light up his hands like flashes of summer lightning. Then darkness closed in thick and manifest, and Aleck still listened. There was more than one man at the other side of the dyke. Aleck's impulse was to move away, for his longed-for tryst was manifestly impossible where he was. But before he had time to move, a hand soft as a young beech leaf settled into his, and a subtle fragrance on the night air answering the thrilling of his heart told him that his sweetheart was by his side. Nance, however, had no idea of going away. She pressed a finger on Aleck's lips, and made him sit down on a boulder of gray granite. Here silently the lovers sat holding each other by the hand.

"Ye'll hae to be cautious the nicht, Sawny," said a voice, which Alec instantly knew to be that of Peter Chrystie; "the keepers crossed the Drumquhat back field into the fir planting at the gloamin'."

"Tell me what I dinna ken, Peter Chrystie!" replied the sullen voice of Sawny Bean.

"Rab there saw them, an', what's mair, we crossed a track through the lang grass as we cam'

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by the wudside," continued Peter, disregarding Sawny's ill-humor.

"Then ye had better gang hame an' coont yer lassies, Peter," chuckled Sawny. "Gin the tracks gaed through the lang grass, it was nae keeper, but a lad comin' coortin'. Na, keepers walk the dry dykesides an' alang the rabbit tracks, as you an' that sump, Rab, wad hae done if ye had ony sense."

On the other side of the dyke from the willow there was a slightest quiver of noise, like fairy laughter heard in a dream. The three men did not move, but Sawny Bean turned his ear backwards like a horse listening, and dilated his nostril as though he could scent a danger.

Out of the darkness at their back floated upward the song which Aleck had heard. The "Hoolet" and the "Deil" had progressed. They now sang:

> "My table thou hast furnished,
> In presence of my foes;
> My head thou dost with oil anoint,
> And my cup overflows."

"I'll anoint ye, baith the twa o' ye," growled Sawny, with grim irreverence; "ye'll raise every pheasant within twa mile, an' then yer table'll maybe no' be so weel furnished."

"Wha's that singin'?" asked Rab Anderson, under his breath.

Rab had a wholesome dread of what was unknown and might therefore not be exactly canny.

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"It's my loon an' lassie. Deil tak' them!" said Sawny, with paternal succinctness.

"Nether Neuk," suddenly began Sawny, after a pause, when the pipes were pulled quietly, and when Aleck could see the spark in one waxing and waning through a crevice in the dyke, "I want my share o' last week's catch, an' I want it *noo!*"

"But Guffie, the game-dealer in Cairn Edward, hasna settled up yet," said Peter Chrystie, in an agitated tone.

"Dinna tell me," said Sawny, savagely; "I ken brawly that Rab An'erson got his siller when he took in the birds."

"Here's fower shillin's. As sure as daith that's a' the siller I hae," asserted Peter, but feebly, as if he did not hope to be believed.

"Fower shillin's for ten brace o' pheasant an' twa pairtricks!" said Sawny. "That'll no' do for me. I wadna kill sparrows for that!"

"But think o' the risk that I rin, Sawny—me, a kenned man, wi' juist twa year o' my lease to rin, an' the laird no' that weel pleased onyway."

"Pleased be hanged!" snarled Sawny. "Ye hae plenty o' siller to pit on the heids o' thae lasses o' yours."

On the other side of the dyke Aleck's hand was grasped in a clutch which meant, "I'll pay out Sawny Bean for that!"

The deep voice of Rab An'erson growled thunderously.

"Leave the lasses alane, Sawny Bean, or maybe it'll be the waur for you. They haena been siccan ill frien's to you and yours that I've heard o'."

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"Ye're richt there," answered the savage, with unexpected graciousness. "It wad be weel for you an' me gin their faither war mair like them."

Aleck felt that the shoulders of his sweetheart were shaking with most unfilial laughter. He listened to hear what Peter would say to this.

"Hae, Sawny," he said, "there's ither five shillin's, an' plague a haet wull ye get mair, though ye fleeched till the morn's morn. Guffie canna tak' nae mair o' them, for they're most mighty ill to get rid o' this time o' year. He says that he has to pook them, an' tak' them through till the English fowk, whaur he sells them for turkeys."

"I ken," said Rab An'erson, "that thae Englishers ken plagit little, but surely to peace they ken a pheasant frae a turkey!"

"Weel, I dinna ken," said Peter, now fluent when awkward questions of payment were off his mind. "That's what the man said, at ony rate. They're baith the most horrid awkward fowl the Almichty ever made, for they're ower muckle for yae man's dinner an' no eneuch for twa!"

Here Rab An'erson put in his word very leisurely.

"Ye mind me, Nether Neuk, o' the minister o' Nether Dullarg that was sent for to a baptism at some hoose up on the hills. He was an awfu' man for his meal o' meat, so, as he got there afore twal' o'clock, the wife set doon till him yin o' her cocks that she had killed for his denner. So when he gaed ben to the room to bapteese the bairn, the auldest lassie tak's her apron an' shoos oot the hen and chickens that had gotten in, an' was clockin' an'

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dabbin' on the floor. 'Shoo,' she says, 'shoo; oot o' here wi' ye; rin, hens, rin, that's the man that ett yer faither!'"

"Ye can sit bletherin' here like whuttericks in a stane dyke till mornin', but I'm gaun to my wark," interrupted Sawny Bean, ungraciously.

"Tak' awfu' care an' no' be gruppit wi' the watchers," said Peter; "an' gin they do catch ye, sweer that naebody but yersel' kens ocht aboot it. Say I'm awfu' sair on ye when I come on ye in the fiel's! Mind, the laird wad turn me oot o' my bit grund gin he as muckle as jaloosed (suspected), an' whaur wad Rab An'erson an' you be then?"

Nance and Aleck seated on their safe side of the dyke, heard Sawny slip away in the direction of the laird's covers, and in due time thereafter Peter Chrystie and his man, Rab, moved off towards Nether Neuk.

As soon as they were gone, Nance danced round and round her "lad," taking first one of his hands and then the other. Aleck stood delighted to see her so merry, yet glad there was no chance of any one seeing them.

"Nance," he said, "Nance, will ye listen to me?"

But Nance was not in a mood for listening.

"I'm gaun hame," she said, "I maun be there afore my faither. He'll gang richt up the stair, an' gin I'm no' there to answer he'll wait at the door till I come."

The beating of Aleck's heart fell to zero.

"Nance," he said, "I hae askit ye mony a time; be douce, and gie me an answer. Ye ken hoo I hae likit ye a' my days. Nance, wull ye hae me?"

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His voice trembled more than Nance had believed possible. She stopped abruptly, stood quiet a moment, and then said archly :

" Bend doon your heid, Aleck."

Aleck stooped, nothing loath. She laid a hand on each shoulder, and put her mouth against his ear.

" No, Aleck," she whispered, " I'll no' hae you ; but gin ye speak to my faither, an' tell him that the laird's verra sair on suspectit poachers, or harborers o' sic, ye'll *maybe get me !*"

CHAPTER XLII.

A NIGHT WITH SAWNY BEAN, POACHER.

As Sawny Bean slunk away towards the poaching resorts where his " work " lay, his lurcher dog followed at his heel, silent as a dark shadow, certain on the trail as a sleuth-hound. Such a dog is worth a fortune to a poacher. Without it his occupation is gone. The keepers always try to poison such an animal, for a dog that will hunt without a sound at night, and obediently bring its master all that it seizes, cannot be replaced in a day or often in a year. Sawny was a determined poacher, noted and conned as such by every keeper within miles. This made him, of course, a marked man ; but, then, he was not disliked by the farmers, for he often swept their plantation marches clean of hares and rabbits, and specially when the " ground game " came out

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to feed on the springing corn, they would have paid Sawny double wages to secure him about the place. Then a stray pheasant was liable to be found on the farmyard wall betimes in the morning, which in due time found its way, no questions asked, into the pot. At harvest time, too, the farmers who went to the market saw the hampers going from the laird's factor to the poulterers in the south, and knew the birds that had been fed with their oats and barley. It was Galloway nature as well as human nature that they would rather that Sawny Bean got them than the laird.

Sawny plunged into the dark shades of the wood. The birches flung down their fragrant sprays on his head. Fir spines fell on his flat cap and slid into the hollow of his neck as he went on all fours like a silent beast. Behind him came his nameless dog, which generally answered, like his wife, to the name of "You, there!" The darkness closed about the two like prison walls. Sawny made his way, running rapidly on his hands and the points of his toes, instinctively avoiding the slightest dry branch or crisp twig which would snap under his touch, yet making faster progress than an ordinary man would walking upright in the daytime. As he went he kept his face turned upward, glancing first one way and then the other towards the sky overhead, which glimmered through the lattices of the dark boughs. Suddenly he stopped, lying flat on the ground, as though suddenly turned to stone. "You, there!" also sank down on the cushion of moss and fir spines, motionless and still. There were few better dogs.

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Once Sawny had been offered twenty "notes" for him. Refused with contumely.

Looking upward one might see sundry dark shapes which could not belong to the anatomy of fir branches silhouetted against the sky. Had any uninstructed person been there, the shapes would have resolved themselves with a startled cry and a rush of wings into a flight of pheasants, which would have waked the covert and brought the keepers down at the double. But Sawny Bean had long since passed this stage. No pheasant would be startled for him or his dog. He had more trouble with the smaller deer of blackbirds and thrushes which roosted in the low underbush, and being strong in the wing broke away with an agitated shriek of terror on being disturbed. But even this difficulty he had long overcome. He was therefore a Master of Arts in his difficult profession.

Gradually Sawny seemed to be growing out of the ground, slowly as though he were only some fast-growing shrub. He pulled out of his warm bosom a joint of rounded bamboo. Taking it in his right hand he softly rubbed it against the side of the branch on which the slumbering pheasants were roosting. One cock bird with a long sweeping tail acknowledged the attention by stretching his neck to the side. The bamboo was warm, and pleasant to the feet. It was strange that so exceedingly suitable a sleeping-place should have been passed over at roosting-time last night. So, with a sleepy cluck of satisfaction, he steps on to the bamboo, and a moment later Sawny Bean's strong left hand closes about his neck. The first pheasant is

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in Sawny's bag. Sawny was the only man who could work a covert alone. He contemned the clumsy way by which a masked band with muzzled loaders would enter a covert and blaze away, making noise enough to scare the country-side. He had the primitive instinct of the savage to use his natural weapons. He was proud of his genius in woodcraft, and rather felt that he had fallen away from the pure simplicity of his method when, in the latter end of harvest, the corn being all gathered in, he brought three sheaves and set them up on a faintly moonlight night in a sheltered bend of the pheasant plantation, firing on the birds that blackened them with a mere pinch of powder which could hardly be heard across a couple of fields. The ensuing slaughter and even Peter Chrystie's money were not sufficient compensation in Sawny's opinion for the brutal complexity of the method.

Sawny's bag was quite heavy when again he started across the coverts to his next station. A little farther on a hare lay yet warm across the path. Her neck was fast in a wire "grin." Death, as the newspapers' reports say, had been instantaneous. Sawny attended to this, not so much from motives of humanity as from those of caution. A hare caught in an ill-set wire cries out with a half-human cry which can be heard a long way off, and has been known to attract the keepers, who, instead of picking up the animal, have simply let it lie until the poacher came along to lift it, when both hare and captor were marched to jail. There was a little fall in the run at the point where Sawny's wire was set, on the principle of the drop, and he

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had taken the precaution to draw his foot for some distance along the other hare runs, forming an obstacle which no self-respecting hare would pass, so that poor Malkin was positively shut in to this mode of self-execution.

A covey of partridges fluttering in a net, a bewildered rabbit or two come to the door of its hole for a breath of night air, another dead pheasant swinging with his neck broken in a loop hung from a branch—these were the further contents of Sawny the poacher's bag when he began to think of turning homeward. He was about to take his usual path out of the covert, between the two tumbled fragments of a great boulder which had been split with a charge of gunpowder in some boyish freak of the laird's, down to the spring where he could get his hands and face washed after the heat of the night, for refreshment more than for cleanliness.

But before he turned into this path he heard out of the depths the clear voices of children singing, and stopped with a curse on his lips. It was another of Walter's songs that came pealing up from the darkness, when the chill winds of the earliest morning were beginning to blow.

"I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come mine aid:
My safety cometh from the Lord,
Who heaven and earth hath made."

The song brought no thought of wrongdoing to the mind of Sawny Bean, dull in all that did not concern the things of nature; but he stopped mechanically, with a dull sense of annoyance. He

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would stop that singing. He would twist their necks for them. He would leave his bag in the ditch and stop their noise. But at this moment he heard the sharp sound which the steel-rimmed heel of a boot makes when scratching on a stone. In a moment he realized that he had nearly walked into a trap. There was a rush of men from behind the great split boulder. A cry of "Hae ye gruppit him, Lamont?" A reply of "Here he is, boys!" Sawny threw himself flat and stiff on the ground. The foremost man tumbled headlong over him, and the second over on the top of the first. Whereupon Sawny retracted himself into the covert at the side as swiftly as a worm goes into the earth when the blackbird misses it. But he had to leave his bag, with all its precious contents, in the hands of the keepers. He himself was soon safe in the thick coverts of the Hanging Shaw.

When he got down his temper was not at its most gracious. Threading his way among the tangled labyrinth of barrels, hen coops, and dog kennels that littered the slope, he came on the "Hoolet" and the "Deil" sitting on that log, called "the hag-clog," on which the firewood was chopped by the pale shadow who was Sawny's wife. They were still singing:

> "Thy foot he'll not let slide, nor will
> He slumber that thee keeps."

Without stopping to speak or even swear, Sawny promptly knocked the singers right and left with the hard palm of his open hand. The "Deil" turned a practical somersault, and, instantly recovering,

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instinctively set his teeth in the calf of his father's leg; but the "Hoolet" lay very still on the grass.

When his father had kicked him off, the "Deil" propped up his sister and ran down to the waterside to bring as much water up as the holes in his hat would allow. The "Hoolet" slowly came round.

"We maunna sing ony mair the nicht; but come here, 'Deil,' an' we'll say Walter's prayer," she said, weakly.

Then the two children began to say over and over together: "Our Father which art in heaven—Our Father which art in heaven—Our Father which art in heaven," very softly and in unison. It was all they knew of the great World's Prayer.

"Noo," said the "Hoolet," say it for oor ain faither, an' maybe God'll mak' him better to us a'."

The bairns drew closer together, and clutched each other tight for company.

"Say it twenty times for oor faither!" commanded the "Hoolet."

And the children, under the waking chirp of the birds and the chill breath of the dawn, said over and over those mystic words in which they believed there was an unknown efficacy:

"OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN—OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN."

The faith that is the essence of prayer was in them. Who shall say that they were not heard? At the door of his lean-to hovel Sandy Bean sat with his hands over his face. The tears were running between his fingers.

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CHAPTER XLIII.

SAWNY BEAN MAKES A NEW START IN LIFE.

It was the full light of the morning of the next day after Sawny Bean's night encounter when Saunders M'Quhirr stepped out of his kitchen door upon the strip of velvet turf which separated the whitewashed wall of the house from the garden gate. He made little noise in rising, finding his clothes winter and summer, dark or light, with the facility born of sixty years of putting them in the same place and order each night. He rarely considered whether it might be June or December till he went out to his morning prayers. He prayed in the corner of the angle of the house where the protrusion of the back wall of the milk-house formed a bieldy corner which was clear and still even when the snowdrifts were all about. Lightly as he had stepped, however, Walter was out before him. He stopped when he saw the master of the house, for it was Aleck whom he had hoped to find. But his "grandfather" apparently had no surprise at seeing him so early astir. Indeed, the Cameronian elder took not the faintest notice of the boy, till with bared head, and holding his broad bonnet reverently in his hand, he made his morning prayer to the God who had permitted him to behold the light of the new day.

Thereafter Walter slipped his hand into his friend's, and the two went their way over the short

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green grass which the sheep were industriously cropping to the edge of the moorland. There they gathered the black faces with many cries and much scampering of collie dogs. Some of the ewes had broken bounds, and it was necessary to find them ere they strayed too far with their lambs. Down the water meadows, past the stepping stones, across which Aleck had carried Walter that day long past when he had first gone to the great house of Dee-side, they went. The meadow-sweet showed its blonde tops above the dense tangle of the lush meadow grasses, like palm trees above a tropic jungle, and the somewhat heavy lusciousness of its smell was lightened by the freshness of the morning and the bushes of sweetbriar by the roadside. Rabbits scattered like spray into their holes before the questing collies, or more leisurely hitched themselves forward out of Walter's way, with leaps from their hind quarters like small kangaroos, instinctively knowing that the lad would not hurt them.

By the side of the road, on a heap of stones which Geordie Breerie, the stone napper, had left half broken, they found Sawny Bean. He was slowly rolling black twist tobacco in the palm of his hand, and there was on his saturnine countenance no trace either of the conflict or of the emotion of the night. He looked up sullenly and nodded a sulky greeting. Saunders stopped, and sat down beside him. Walter ranged round with the collies, plunging into the copses and getting his feet wet among the lilies by the waterside. Saunders had often thought that he had not done his duty by this neglected outcast. He would do what he could now. Perhaps his words

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would not be wholly inopportune. But he forgot that it is not always when we are ready to begin that the object of our good intentions is equally prepared.

"Did ye see two yowes wi' three lambs ony way down the waterside?" he began.

Saunders knew that if Sawny had seen them even at the worst of times, he would have let them pass unharmed. Sawny was exceedingly honest in the matter of domestic animals, with the single exception of dogs. Sheep were kittle cattle, and the after fear of the dread death penalty, not so long ago abrogated, lay heavy on his soul.

"Na," said Sawny, "there's nae sheep been by this road this morning, nor since the dew fell yestreen either. Yer yowes'll be ower by the Laird's mairch by the back field."

"I saw the keepers that road at the gloamin' yestreen," continued the farmer. "Was it you they were after, na, Sawny?"

"'Deed, an' I wadna wunner," said the poacher, frankly, knowing that though Saunders might preach he would never peach. "They nearly gruppit me by the Cloven Stane on the edge o' the Lang Wud. An' they got my bag clean awa', an' a' that was in't, the dirty scoondrels!"

"Sawny, man, ye'll no' gie ower till ye be jailed for yer poachin' pranks. Ye're a clever falla' an' a guid worker—what for can ye no' gie up the poachin' an' lead a respectable life?"

"Man, Drumquhat, ye kenna the wild bluid. The faither o' me was a gipsy, my mither was a Lee; she carried me to the verra rabbit holes, an' helpit

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my faither to ferrit aneath the laird's ain windows. Na, it's bred in the bane," continued Sawney. "I'll poach as lang as I leeve, as lang as there's yin o' thae bonny gray cattle playin' aboot their holes. Ay, they're braw an' bonny wi' their sleek bit lugs an' their white tails joukin' like butterflees amang the gress. D'ye see that yin ower there?" he continued, pointing with his finger where a rabbit popped up its head inquisitively for a moment over the bank. "That yin has gotten a family o' three in the second hole when ye get to the top o' the knowe."

"Sawny, ye dinna mean to say that ye ken ilka rabbit in the wud by head mark, as I ken my sheep?"

"Ay," said the poacher, calmly, "I ken every weel-grown rabbit in four lairdships. That's the only way to poach," he continued. "The wuds an' the fiel's are your hoose, the clud o' nicht is your best friend. Ye maun be mair at hame in the thickest o' the fir covers than in yer ain kitchen. Ou, ay, the dowg an' me are fell fond o' the big gray sheep wi' the lang lugs an' the wee gray yins wi' the white tails; but we like to see them best wi' a bress collar on. My certes, but we're richt weel pleased to dress the corp an' pay their passage across to Liverpool!"

It was in the days when the old steamer "Countess of Galloway" was running out of Kirkcudbright Bay, and when Liverpool formed the most convenient market for such produce as Sawny Bean provided and Peter Chrystie franked across the channel.

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Sawny's lurcher had been lying enjoying a not undeserved repose under a birch at the side of the heap of stones. Suddenly it opened one eye and cocked forward the stub of a tattered ear, showed a fine double row of teeth, and uttered a low, warning growl. Without moving a muscle, Sawny said to Saunders:

"There's a keeper comin' doon the wud. He'll step oot on the road in a meenit by the dykeside there."

In five minutes a tall, velveteen-clad keeper with a couple of dogs at heel sprang down the bank, stood a moment with the sunlight spraying on his handsome figure, and then walked irresolutely towards them. Sawny took no notice, but Saunders courteously gave him "Good day." The keeper returned his salutation, for Saunders was a man of well known probity, and to see him in company with Sawny Bean only conveyed to the mind of the keeper that he was endeavoring to bring him to a better and more Cameronian way of thinking, which indeed was the truth. This is what it is to have a character.

"Somebody," said the keeper, looking severely at the unconscious Sawny, "has been in Peter Chrystie's barn amang his bags yestreen. Mind you, Sawny Bean, liftin' pheasants may only be poachin', but liftin' corn bags is stealin'!"

Even as a keeper he betrayed that strange sense of a difference in moral quality between the taking of the wild things of earth and air and the misappropriation of the personal property which a man gathers about his homesteads.

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"D'ye mean to say that it was me that stealed Peter Chrystie's bag, an' liftit your pheasants?" asked Sawny, truculently, but with an indescribable side wink in the direction of Saunders M'Quhirr.

"I dinna say—I ken!" maintained the keeper, firmly.

"Ye hear, Drumquhat?" said the poacher. "Ye'll bear me witness when I hae him up afore the sheriff for defamation o' character? I'm no gaun to hae the guid name o' Sawny Bean mishandled by a character like this wi' the laird's leggings on."

"Ye'll find yersel' in the jail o' Kirkoobree some o' thae fine mornin's!" said the keeper, as a retort general, not being able to think of anything more definite.

"Weel," said Sawny, "that is as may be, but ae thing I ken—that it's to your guid that I'm no' ta'en there. For if I gang, ye'll gang alang wi' me."

The keeper blanched, and seemed to swallow down something quickly.

"Ay," continued Sawny, "sorry wad I be to say a word again a ceevil mairriet man like yoursel', but gin I war ta'en I micht hae to mak' a clean breest o't, an' amang other things it micht come oot wha it was that met Guffie's auldest son—him that's a poulterer i' Newcastle, at Da'beattie station wi' twa hamper o' game unkenned o' by the laird. Ye mind o' me tellin' you at the time, Drumquhat, that they were a' ta'en oot o' the west side o' the Lang Plantin', an' ilka yin o' them was fed wi' your corn."

"Mr. Bean," said the keeper, in a changed tone, "the less said aboot some things the better. Ye

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micht get innocent men wi' sma' families into sore trouble."

"Naething wad be farther frae my thochts," said Sawny, coolly. "I'll get nae man, even a gamey, into trouble; but gin I war you I wad pit that corn-seck back into Peter Chrystie's barn an' say naething aboot it." "Here, Walter!" he called, "tak' this up to Peter Chrystie's and throw it into the barn. Tell Nance Chrystie to gie ye a kiss to tak' to her lad."

The gamekeeper whistled up his dogs, which had kept at a safe distance from the brilliant teeth and pricked ears of Sawny Bean's lurcher. He tramped away with an uneasy heart.

Saunders waited till the man's footsteps had died away up the road in the direction of his home.

"Noo, Sawny," he said, "I'm gaun to mak' you an offer. The mistress an' me are gaun ower to the toon o' Paris some time in the spring. I want a decent man to help the lads. Wull you come? I'll no' need ye a'thegither till then, but I hae gotten the richt o' killin' the rabbits frae the laird noo, an' till that time ye can trad rabbits for me, an' I'll gie ye the half o' a' ye catch. Only, nae mair nicht wark, an' nae ploys wi' the keepers."

Sawny Bean rose and took his hand.

"Saunders M'Quhirr," he said, "ye're the best man in six pairishes. Yestreen I wadna hae dune it, but this mornin' I'm gaun to try to be a better man for the bairns' sake. I havena been ower guid a faither to them."

"Ay, it's time ye turned ower a new leaf," said Drumquhat, shaking his head solemnly.

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"Weel, I'm gaun to begin noo," said Sawny, penitently. Then, with a flash of the old man: "But ye'll hae to be canny wi' me for a wee. I'm no' that shairp o' the sicht, an' gin a bit maukin hare gets amang the rabbits, ye'll no' hae to be ower hard on me."

CHAPTER XLIV.

GOOD-BYE TO DEESIDE.

THERE was the stir and bustle of preparation at Drumquhat. All the night there had been some one astir. Lights gleamed in one window and then another as candles were carried from room to room, but the morning came with a strange stillness as, under a sense of duty more than from any hope of sleep, all the family had lain down to rest, most of them fully dressed, upon their beds. Walter lay with his arms clasped about his mother's neck, completely dressed as he had thrown himself across the patchwork coverlet. He had known no other home than Drumquhat, and though no doubt the feeling would work off quickly enough, not even the thought of seeing that unimaginable new world of Paris could bring him any relief. His mother looked forward with fear to leaving her place of refuge for the great city where she had known so many vicissitudes and so much sorrow.

Saunders M'Quhirr, who had once been in Glasgow, was calm. But even he was earlier than

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usual at his place of prayer. He stood there a long time commending those who were to remain at home to the care of "Him that never slumbereth nor sleepeth." It was little more than the first gray of the dawning when Mary M'Quhirr opened the kitchen door and stole out, wrapping her hands in her apron as she encountered the chill wind which blew over the moors to the east. She slipped into the stackyard and went round the house, looking quietly and somewhat sadly at each well-known object. Every stone her foot touched, she knew; every hole in the bank, where the dusty mother hens ruffled their feathers on hot afternoons, was dear to her. She had a feeling that it would be long before she saw them again. As she passed the "Guidman's" corner she saw him in his place of prayer, but she did not interrupt him, only stood still for a moment and put up a little prayer of her own.

When she got to the milkhouse door she drew a bright key from her pocket and entered. With a trembling hand she began to skim the cream from the milk of the previous evening, starting the thick, rich cream over the edge of the broad, stone dish, and deftly guiding it into a separate vessel.

While she was doing so a shadow fell across the door. It was her eldest son, Aleck, who stood with his shoulder against the doorpost and silently looked at his mother as if he had something on his mind.

"Mither," he said at last, "my faither says that gin I do weel for the ferm when you are awa', he'll tak' an' stock the Mickle Larg for me when ye come back!"

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Mary M'Quhirr was a good woman, few better; but it is not in woman born to rejoice at the knowledge that another woman has taken the first place in the love of the first man-child whom she bore and nursed. She knew what was coming, for her husband had told her, but the words froze on her lips.

"Ye're thinking o' leaving us, Aleck!" she said, shortly.

"No, mither, no leavin' ye, but juist takin' a bit grund aside ye. Ye ken, mither, that me an' Nance Chrystie has made it up—"

Mary M'Quhirr had to turn away to keep the tears from running into the brown "milk-bines." But Aleck, whose wits were sharpened by love, saw and understoood.

"Mither, she's as good a lass as is in the countryside. There's naething that she wouldna do for onybody in trouble—an' ye ken ye said yoursel' that ye likit her real weel, an' that the lass couldna' help the kind o' folk she cam' o'!"

"It's no' that, it's no' that, Aleck, it's juist that your mither's a silly auld body that thinks she can keep her sons at her apron strings a' their days. But do ye no' think that ye micht wait a year or twa. Ye're unco young to mairry!"

"We're four or five years aulder than you an' my faither war when ye took up hoose in a but an' a ben. Did ye begin ower early, mither?" asked Aleck, gently, but with full assurance of his facts.

"I ken, Aleck, I ken! It's nocht but what I've been lookin' for for a lang time. See you an' be as guid a man to Nancy as your faither has been to me."

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Aleck sketched a pattern with his toe on the ground.

"Hae ye spoken to her faither?" his mother asked, looking up quickly.

"No, mither, but we were coontin' on doin' that the day."

"Ye can do naething withoot that, ye ken, Aleck!"

"'Deed, mither, I'm no' so sure o' that. I've heard that you an' my faither did verra weel withoot yer ain faither's guidwull for a gye while after ye were mairriet. But I dinna think there's muckle fear o' her faither no' bein' agreeable."

"I'm nane so sure o' that. Peter was a michty prood an' fikie craitur a' the day o' him."

* * * * *

In the afternoon of this day quite a large company assembled at the little station of Deeside on the edge of the moors. The clean new granite-built buildings gleamed white in the light of the afternoon sun. Here were Nelly Anderson and Archie Grierson, who had come by the woodland path over the fields and by the waterside. What they had said to one another need not be set down in this place, but when they came out on the open road Nelly's eyes brimmed with tears, and there was a pride of manhood on the young man's face as though he saw the way through deeds of danger to the desire of his heart. There was Nance Chrystie, fresh as the morning, in her light print, and ribbon of sky blue to match her eyes—little sprays of fair hair blowing about her forehead under her hat.

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She came with her father, who wished to look after her among so many of the youth of the neighborhood gathered to bid the Drumquhat folk "God speed" on their long journey. Nance had also her plans, and had indeed suggested that it would be neighborly of her father to come over to the station. When Nance came she went into the dusky little waiting-room, where the water-can with P. P. R. on its side in black letters stands (generally empty). To her surprise, Aleck's mother, who was there alone, caught her in her arms and kissed her. Then the two women looked at each other.

"He's been a guid son to me. He'll be a guid man to you!" said Mary M'Quhirr.

To her own infinite surprise Nance burst into a passion of tears, and Mary hushed her like her own daughter.

When they came out Nance was still a little wet about the lashes, but carried it off with an assumption of petulance which considerably astonished Aleck, who feared in his stupid, man-like way that the two women had been quarrelling. Felix Durand and his little maid, grown into a tall girl with a blowing cloud of golden hair, had driven over from the great house of Deeside. Marion walked up and down with Nelly and Walter. As they came to the upper end of the little station platform a small stone struck Walter on the breast. He looked up, and out of a bush of broom he saw arise the black elf-locks and great dark eyes of the "Hoolet." He beckoned her to come down, but she imperiously called him up. Soon therefore he left his companions and went to where the "Hoolet"

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and the "Deil" sat half-concealed by the bushes of the embankment.

"Good-bye, 'Hoolet,'" said Walter, "I'll no' be lang afore I'm back at Drumquhat again."

But the "Hoolet" only gloomed under her gipsy brows without holding out her hand.

"Wull ye learn that yellow-heided lassie the Psalms ye learned me?" she asked at last.

"I dinna ken!" said Walter, doubtfully, who had something of the kind in his mind.

"If ye do," said the "Hoolet." "I'll never sing them mair, and I'll tear the buik wi' 'Our Father' in't to rags o' tatters."

"Then I'll promise," said Walter.

"Say as sure as daith and dooble daith!" demanded the "Hoolet," suspiciously. Walter repeated the prescribed formula. Then the "Hoolet" gave him her hand and looked down. Walter glanced once round. The whole company were gathered about the sliding ticket panel. The broad backs of Sawny Bean and Rab Affleck filled up the doorway. There was not a sign of the tall girl with the yellow hair anywhere. Walter stooped and kissed the "Hoolet." He told himself that this was what would comfort her when he was away.

The train at last came slowly along the great curve across the moorland, swinging through the great cutting from which the material for the embankment had been taken. In that country the passengers come an hour before the time for the train. They keep the clocks fast on purpose. They know that there is no security in such an

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irresponsible thing as a railway engine going or coming at the time specified in the corner of the local paper.

There was a brief turmoil, a hearty handshake or two, and the train with its freight moves out under its long, trailing plume of white smoke. On the platform stand those who have been left behind long after the curving line of carriages has passed out of sight. They stand silent till a sound like dull, distant thunder tells them that the great viaduct of the Boat o' Rhone has been passed in safety. Then with heavy hearts they scattered, Sawny Bean and Rab Affleck to their hills, the other sons of Drumquhat homeward. The "Hoolet" and the "Deil" vanish unseen even by their father. Archie Grierson carries his sore heart into a congenial solitude; but Nance Chrystie and Aleck pass out along with her father, for Peter Chrystie's day's excitement is yet to begin

CHAPTER XLV.

THE FALL OF PETER CHRYSTIE.

A HAZE of intense heat lay on the Galloway moors as the three turned out of the little wayside station after seeing the travelers start on their wonderful journey to the unknown country. The hill tops stood out a pale azure against the white sky. The shadows in the lirks of the hills were blue and

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cool. Peter Chrystie, who had come most reluctantly, was glad to be done with the ceremony. He eyed Aleck M'Quhirr, who walked sedately at his side, with a sidelong glance which said as plain as words that he would not be ill pleased to see him go off about his business. Since his account had grown so greatly at the Cairn Edward bank he had begun to think that nothing less than a bonnet laird at the very least would be good enough for any of his daughters, specially for Nancy, who, in spite of her waywardness, or perhaps because of it, was the apple of his eye.

"Ye'll hae to bide gey close at hame, I'm thinkin', Alexander," he said, turning his shifty, piercing eye for a moment upon his companion. "Yer father has lippened a deal to you."

Aleck was pondering an answer. He had always to think twice or thrice before he could get his tongue started. After it was in good going order he could talk with anybody; but a Galloway man's tongue is a ship of broad beam and heavy tonnage, difficult to get under weigh.

But it was a cold day when Nance Chrystie's speech was frozen within her.

"Aleck has that big notions that it'll no' be lang afore he draps speakin' till the likes o' us, faither."

"What mean ye, lassie?" said her father. "Are ye gane gyte?"

"They tell me that Aleck and his faither war lookin' at the Larg the ither day. Aleck's gettin' a big man thae days," she continued.

Peter Chrystie looked at the young man inquiringly. He had his own eye on the Larg as a

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promising addition to the farm of Nether Neuk, and it was not at all pleasing to him to hear that he had a competitor in the handsome young giant beside him. True, he had no doubt that he could outbid him, but the laird was none so caring about letting his property as "led" farms when he could get a good resident tenant; and there was no doubt of the soundness of the financial position of Alexander M'Quhirr, Younger, of Drumquhat, if his father was minded to back him up.

"Then we'll see ye nae mair ower by at byre time," said Nance, with a wicked glance in her eye. "But maybe ye'll no' object to speak till us when ye meet us on the road, in the by-gaun like."

By this time Aleck had gathered himself up. He could not keep pace with the nimble wit of his sweetheart, but he had a straightforward directness very decisive and fearless. He went at any obstruction with his head down, like a bull at a stone dyke.

Nance Chrystie caught the look in his eye, and shut her little hands tight, for she knew that the matter had in its main issues gone out of her control.

"Nether Neuk," said Aleck, speaking slowly, and with a strong, solid emphasis on each word, "listen to me. Nancy an' me has made it up to get mairriet. Hae ye ony objections?"

They were crossing a bit of moorland along a green sheep path cut diagonally across by drains which were sometimes bridged by a plank covered with turf and sometimes left open. The color rose to Peter Chrystie's face at this direct assault. He

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seemed to be summoning all his energies for a thunderous reply which would sweep away the audacious youth in a volley of oaths. Nance caught the flood coming, and being a little in advance she kicked the little three-foot bridge to one side, and Peter Chrystie stepped suddenly up to his waist in the fine, black, peaty ooze of the moss.

"Faither," said Nance, "I wush ye wad look where ye are gaun, an' no' rin ram-stammin into bogs as if ye had nae een in yer heid. Do ye no' ken that thae's yer second best black breeks?"

She was successful in turning the flood of his wrath on herself. He stormed at her up hill and down dale for five minutes till there was hardly a bad word left in him. His voice rose to a strident scream and sank again. Aleck and Nancy both offered to help him out, but he snarled at them like an angry cat.

"I'll shoot ye, as sure as ever I see ye—ay, or ony o' the clan o' ye—aboot the Nether Neuk!" he spluttered. "Ye're a set o' deceitfu', twa-faced hypocrites. No, I'll no' be liftit oot by the like o' ye! Fetch Rab Affleck!"

But Aleck had him beneath the two arms at the back, and lifted him out of the tenacious black moss with a "*cloop*" like the uncorking of a bottle.

"Noo, sit ye doon, Peter Chrystie, an' hear reason, for ye're no gaun oot o' this till I get a ceevil answer. Nance, haud you your tongue the noo!"

Aleck M'Quhirr had the bit between his teeth now, and it augured well for the happiness of the future home that Nance rather liked being bidden so

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sharply to be silent. She loved Aleck more than ever for his masterfulness. She was a woman.

Peter sat gloomily regarding the state of his legs and boots, which was certainly sad enough in all conscience.

"What objection hae ye to me?" Aleck began. "Gin ye ken ocht again me oot wi' it noo to my face. Do ye think that I canna provide respectably for a wife—as a dochter o' yours should be?"

"Ye'll never hae a dochter o' mine wi' my guid-will," said Peter, sullenly.

"My faither has promised to tak' the Larg for me when he comes hame. He has spoken to the laird, an' if I do weel when he's awa' he'll gie me a haun' wi' the stockin' o' it."

"Larg or no Larg—stock or no stock, you'll get nae lass o' mine!"

"Your lass I'm gaun to hae, wi' yer leave or withoot it; but I wad raither hae it wi' than withoot. I want nae disturbance."

"An' our lease so far run, faither," interjected Nance, quietly.

"What has that to do wi't?" roared Peter.

"Weel, faither, ye see Sawny Bean's left ye, an' gane ower to the Drumquhat cot-hoose," said Nance, "an' Aleck an' his faither ken a' aboot the loads o' game that ye sent doon to Guffy, the game-dealer."

Peter Chrystie blanched to the roots of his grizzled gray hair. But, Nance went on, slipping her hand into her father's:

"But only Aleck an' his faither ken, an' it'll be

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graun' an' easy to let it go nae farther—to keep it in the family like."

Her father was still silent, but there was the light of reason in his eye.

"An', faither, ye ken the Larg is a guid big ferm, an' it'll tak' a lot o' stock. I ken ye wush us weel. Aleck's faither does gey weel by us if he stan's ahint him wi' the laird. I'm sure ye'll be wantin' to be upsides wi' him. Ther's twal score o' sheep for the hill—"

Her father nodded with the affectionate look which a Jew might have cast on a Plantagenet who was drawing out his teeth and his gold at the same time.

"An' a matter o' maybes ten kye," pursued Nance, remorselessly.

Peter Chrystie hesitated. The frown again gathered on his brow.

"The laird will be sure to prosecute," said his daughter.

"Ye'll get the kye," said Peter.

"An' ye'll no' see us bate for twa pair o' horse an' my ain powny, forbye. Ye were never a yin to do a thing by halves."

Peter Chrystie broke into a relieving laugh.

"O' a' the impidinest besoms that ever was, Nance, you are the warst."

"I'm my faither's dochter," said that young lady, nowise abashed; "an' ye'll promise that we'll get the horse."

"I suppose ye'll hae to," growing almost pleased to suffer from the abnormal cleverness of his own child.

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After these matters were settled, Nance and her sweetheart sat still on the spot of their engagement with her father, where the complete victory was gained by the young woman. Peter had at her command gone home to change his bemired garments.

"Nance," said her lover, "what made ye so sore on your faither? We could hae managed withoot that."

"Aleck," said the practical Nance, "we'll be nane the waur o' the beasts, an' he'll like us a' the better for no' being saft wi' him. Mair nor that, he can braw an' weel afford it."

Peter counted up his promises on his way home, and said with a rueful laugh:

"Davert, that lass cowes a'; she's ower clever for her ain faither, though what she sees in a sumph like yon is mair than I can tell."

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE EXPERIENCES OF JACOB BERGMAN, NOW HEAD WAITER IN HEIDELBERG, ONCE A SPY IN PARIS.

I AM writing this for my friend in Scotland, whose strange name I cannot spell. He wishes to put it in the story about Scotland which he is writing. I saw these things, and I wrote them because of the love I have for him, the young Herr who saved my brother's life among the black men in Egypt. Our

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Fritz went away to be Gordon's man in the Soudan of Africa, and he wrote to our father and the mother at home in the village: "I am a great man, and the intendent of a military station, and have soldiers under me, and he who is our general is hardly a man. He has no fear, and death is to him as life." So this young Herr, whom I love the same as my own brother, met Fritz when there was not the thickness of a Wurst-skin between him and the torture that makes men blanch for thinking on, and I will tell you the story how he saved him.

But the Herr says that I am a "dumbhead," and many other things, for that I can never tell anything that I begin to tell straightforwardly like a street in Berlin. He says my talk is crooked, like the "Philosopher's Way" after one passes the red sawdust of the Hirsh-gasse, where the youngsters "drum" and "drum" * all the Tuesdays and Fridays, like the donkeys that they are. I am to talk about Paris, and the terrible time there in the war of Seventy. Ah! the time when there was a death at every door, the time that Heidelberg and the Thurm village will not forget, that made gray the hairs of Jacob, the waiter, those sixty days he was in Paris, when the men's blood was spilt like water, and the women and the children fell and were burned, or died shrieking on the bayonet point. There is no hell that the priests tell of like the streets of Paris in the early summer of Seventy-one. But it is necessary that I make a beginning, else I shall never make an ending, as Madame of

* Fight with German rapiers.

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the "Prinz Karl" says when there are many guests, and we have to rise after two hours' sleep, as if we were still on campaign.

Comes now the young Herr, and he has his supper, for ever since he comes to the "Prinz Karl" he takes his dinner in the midst of the day, as a man should.

"Ouch!" he says, "it makes one too gross to eat in the evening."

So the Herr takes his dinner like a good German, and when there is supper he will always have old Jacob to tell him tales, in which he says that there is no beginning, no era, nor Hegira, no Anno Domini, but only the war of Seventy. But he is a hearty young man, and will have his jesting. Yesterday he said:

"Jacob, Jacob, this duck he must have been in the War of Siebenzig; for, beegomme, he is tough enough."

But one night he did not come home, and instead there came an officer clanging his spurs, and twisting at his upper lip, and the bracing board on his back tight as a drum, the corners stretching the cloth till it was nearly cut through. Then Jacob Bergmann's heels came together, and he saluted the officer of the Kaiser, though the shoulder-straps were not ten days old on the boy.

"Soldier?" said he, and I bowed not like the Oberkellner [head water] that I am. "Of the war?" said he.

"Of three wars," answered I, standing up straight that he might see the Iron Cross, which I wear un-

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der my dress coat. "Jacob Bergmann, of the Intelligence Corps, at your service."

"Ah, you speak French!"

"Twenty years in Paris, and ten months during the siege."

Then his face darkened, and he lifted his eyes from the Cross.

"Does the English Herr live here?" he asked. "Is he within, for I have a cartel for him?"

Then I told him that the English Herr was no schlaeger-fighter, though like the lion for bravery, as my brother had been witness.

"But what is the cause of quarrel?" I asked.

"The cause is only that idiot, Hellmuth; he was swaggering full of beer as the great tun is empty of it, and, meeting your Herr on the New Neckar Bridge, he thought that he would get some easy glory by pushing rudely against him. 'Pardon,' says the Englishman, lifting his hat, for he is a gentleman, and by his manner noble. But Hellmuth turned at the end, and came again with all his corps comrades to back him, and, standing just so, he was about to open his mouth to laugh, when the Englishman took him by the collar, and by some art turned him over his foot into the gutter, which ran full of half-melted snow. The moon came out from behind a wrack of cloud, and all the men on the bridge saw, and you could hear the laughing at the Molkenkur."

"But that is no cause for a challenge, Excellentz," said I. "How can an officer bring such a thing?"

"Ach!" said he, shrugging his shoulders, "a

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fight is a fight, cause or no cause, and Hellmuth is my mother's nephew, though he be but a fool."

So I showed him up to the Herr's room, and though I tried to get away I could hear their voices.

"You have my friend insulted, and you must satisfaction make."

"That will I gladly do, if your friend will come up here to me."

"I bring you a cartel, and I am an officer of the Kaiser."

"Then, Herr Hauptmann, you and I know what fighting is, and that snicking and clipping at noses is no fighting. Tell your friend to come up and have a turn here with the four-ounce gloves, and I'll give him all the satisfaction he wants."

The officer came down, and he said:

"The Englishman will not fight, but he has more steel in his veins than a dozen of Hellmuths. Thunderweather, I will fight Hellmuth myself, if he desires to be led away. Once before I gave him a scar of heavenly beauty."

So he clanked off as he came, and he was a kerl of mettle and a good young officer.

But the Herr is come, and he says he will tear up the whole of this nonsense, that I have no word of Paris on the paper yet, and my head is the head of a calf, and also of various other English animals. So I will be brief. I was in Seventy what the people call a spy. I served my country in more terrible places than the field of Weissenberg or the hill Spichern. Yawohl! there were few Germans that could be taken for Frenchmen in Paris in those

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months; but in Paris I was, all through the war, and in the service at the Hotel de Ville, and my letters went through the balloon post to England, and so back to Berlin and Versailles, where my brothers were, and the Kaiser whom I serve. For I am a Prussian. I waited daily on Trochu, and I waited on Jules Favre when he dined; but there was no one would have then suspected that Jules Lemaire with the accent of the Midi, was other than a stupid provincial come to Paris to earn the money and see the life. Not for nothing was I schooled at Clermont Ferrand.

Only once was I nearly discovered. On a March morning, when a bitter wind was sweeping the bare, hacked trees on the Champs Elyseès, I went to the Halles to make the market, as I went every morning; for the best of the provision was kept for the Hotel de Ville, and I went daily to sign for it and select it.

Suddenly I saw riding towards me a blue Prussian Hussar of my old regiment, alone at first, then two others some distance behind. He was a sergeant who had knocked me about much when I joined the colors. I hated the sight of him then, but now it was the best I could do to keep down the German "Hoch!" that rose to the top of my throat, and stopped there all in a lump. Listen! The gamins and the vauriens, the louts and cruel rabble, were after him and about him, and there were groups of National Guards looking for their regiments, or off to see what they could lay their hands on. But Strauss of the Blue Hussars sat his horse stiff and steady as at parade, and looked out under his eye-

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brows, and the mob howled and surged. Ach, Himmel, but old Strauss sat steady, and rode his horse at a walk, easy, as if going up Unterden Linden under the eyes of the pretty girls—not that Strauss cared as much for these eyes as I myself would have done—ah—in Siebenzig! And his two men came behind him, and so they rode, like true Prussians every one, and it took Jacob Bergmann all his time to keep from crying out, but he could not keep down the sobs; but the Frenchmen thought that I wept to see the disgrace of Paris. And when the three stayed at the halt a moment, under the pressure of the noisy whelps, and grimly fitted a cartridge into their carbines, then I ran like the rest, and so no man took me for a German that day or any other day.

Then I went to the Halles, and two carriers came with me, for the blockade was broken and the new provision was beginning to come in by the Porte Maillot. As I went about, selecting and grumbling like a brute of a surly Frenchman, an old man with beautiful white hair came alongside, and asked the market butcher very civilly for a piece of the beef he was cutting for me. The seller was dazed with drink, or brutal by his nature, for he refused with most foul language, and that though there was a young and beautiful lady with the old man.

"Have politeness," I said to the stall-keeper, "or else I will report you to the General."

So I gave to the old man what he required from the portion of the Hotel de Ville. This I did for the sake of the lady's eyes as much as for the old man's white hairs, and also because the butcher was a

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beast of Burgundy who daily maligned the Prussians. The old man gave me his card, saying that I might find it useful at some future time ; for which I thanked him, not knowing who might have it in his power to help me. Then I bowed the bow of Jules Lemaire, from the Midi, to the lady, but it was the German heart of Jacob Bergmann who thanked her with his eyes for the look she left behind her.

When we went along the bare and shell-battered streets towards the Hotel de Ville one of the commissionaires who carried the material came to me, and said :

" Monsieur Jules, do you know that the old man to whom you spoke was Felix Durand, whom all the patriots of the National Guard worship, calling him the Deliverer of '48."

CHAPTER XLVII.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

In a house by the gate that leads to Saint Ouen had dwelt, during the long, confused havoc of the siege of Paris, the family who had started so gaily to Paris to settle the business of Walter's future. The July heats, when they reached the city, had been full of turmoil, of cheering mobs, of well-dressed people parading the streets and boulevards. The Emperor drove hither and thither, greeted everywhere with such cheers as had not been his for

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years. Only in Belleville and Montmartre, and along the northern border of Paris looking towards the ironworks of St. Denis, dark-browed men gathered and talked apart. It was partly that very tumult which enabled Felix Durand to enter Paris safely, and to dwell there during the hot and fevered weeks which preceded the downfall of Sedan.

Daily Felix took his party out to the fortifications to look across the great swelling country to where the terraces of St. Germain made a high level line against the sky. Nelly Anderson walked mostly with Mary M'Quhirr, for in the bustle of Paris and the rush of tremendous events the elder woman had drawn for protection to the younger, and it was often touching to see the confidence with which the douce and sturdy Scotswoman put her hand into the hand of the woman whom she had harbored so long in the security of her home among the Galloway moors.

There had been talk of the whole party making their way to a seaport, and so over to England before the hands of the Germans fastened about the throat of Paris; but Felix could not leave the city at that juncture, having been swept into the stream of Republican organization, and the others could not go without him. The city was divided into the two great factions of the Republic of the Middle Classes and the Republic of the Commune. It was among the cooler heads of this latter section that Felix took his place as a leader. During the siege all internecine strife had been hushed in the face of the enemy; but when the Germans had come and gone the disappointment of the armed workmen of

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the National Guard, led by half a dozen theorists and dominated by as many cruel and self-seeking adventurers, culminated in the overturn of the National government within the city of Paris, the retirement of Favre and Thiers to Versailles, and the establishment of the Commune.

The young men who came swiftly to the head of affairs only knew the name of Felix Durand as the great hero of the revolt of 1848, and to some extent deferred to his opinion, at least before the people; but really they did at all times solely according to their own will, and towards the end of March the power in Paris fell into the hands of men who, without bowels of mercy, slaughtered all who were suspected of opposing their will with hardly the bare pretence of justice.

More and more "Father Felix" and the great Italian patriot, Garibaldi, who had been associated with him in the early cheering of the crowds of the National Guards, were put out of the consideration of the Red Revolutionaries who appeared from nowhere at the head of affairs in the French capital. So that generally, save when visited by some of those who knew him or desired his advice, Felix Durand kept his house on the St. Ouen road, and daily led out his little flock to the shell-torn and trampled grass of the fortifications. The newer men—Assi, Delescluze, Flourens—paid the old patriot a curious deference, though evidently compassionating his inability to go with them all the way in the overturn of all the elements of government. It was upon the subject of the shooting of General Thomas, once a companion in arms in the

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dark days of '48, and who had been expelled along with him by the Buonapartist commissions of 1851, that Felix Durand finally withdrew himself from any participation in the acts of the Commune. But among the vast strength of the National Guard who held Paris he was popular to a degree.

Saunders M'Quhirr remained outwardly the same man that he had been at Drumquhat—douce, quiet, sensible, taking the events that came as part of the experience which God had ordained for him in this world. Mary clung to Nelly Anderson, trusting to her confidence in Felix, and finding an ever-increasing astonishment in the fact that she could speak the strange language of this godless people, which sounded to her like the gibbering and mewing of apes. Walter had wandered as far as he could on all sides, and had busied himself in making a complete collection of chassepots and needle guns, revolvers, pieces of shell, and all the abandoned trappings of war which he found in the deep fosse of the outer fortifications.

It was a chill day in May, 1879, the east wind sang among the long, bare scarp of the fortifications. Walter and Saunders had come out alone to pass the dreary morning. They were talking about Drumquhat.

"Will we ever get back there?" asked the boy.

"If the Lord wull," returned Saunders.

"I wonder how Donald, the pet lamb, is getting on, an' the dowgs, an' Aleck?"

"God will tak' care o' them. He's takin' care o' us."

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"Ay," said Walter, "I ken that, but I wish we were at hame again."

Above them they could see the grim battlements of the Buttes Montmartre, held by the rebellious National Guard. The red flag floated overhead. Paris lay clear and gray to the north and east, but there was firing along the west and south, and the constant rattle of firearms came from the direction of Versailles.

A detachment of National Guards under the command of an officer with a red sash and frayed epaulets came tramping irregularly toward them. There was little military order among them. Each man went as he pleased, and carried his gun as liked him best. Most of them were smoking cigars, and there was much talking and coarse merriment in the ranks. The soldiers were about to pass, when their officer, suddenly wheeling, caught Saunders by the arms and thrust his hand into his breast pocket. Saunders shook off his grasp lightly, but the officer, calling out a word of command, brought the ragged regiment about the pair.

Then the officer proceeded to question them, but, of course, without effect. Saunders M'Quhirr took from the very pocket into which the officer had so rudely put his hand a paper which Felix had given him for such an occasion. The officer looked at it, and read the signature aloud.

"It is a *'laisser passer'* from Felix Durand," he said.

"Felix Durand is a traitor," cried a man from the ranks.

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"No, he is a patriot, and was a Republican before you were born," cried another.

"Take them both to the Hotel de Ville," commanded the officer.

The detachment marched away as before through the streets, the soldiers singing ribald songs, smoking their cigars, and holding their guns at any angle. Here and there a passer-by would cry "*Vive la Commune!*" as they passed, but generally the few who had ventured out made off indoors as quickly as possible. One man was a little too late in doing this, for his flight caught the eye of the officer, and he ordered the door to be opened, and, having routed out the unfortunate from under a bed, he ordered him to fall in alongside Walter and Saunders.

"You at least are a Frenchman, and we will make you fight for the honor of France," he said.

The poor, trembling, white-faced prisoner kept repeating:

"But I am a man of peace, and I cannot fight."

"Well, if you do not fight you will be shot, so it will be better for you to take the chance of the Versaillists shooting you than the certainty that we will!"

Before they had gone far some of the soldiers in the company cried out that they were thirsty, and that here was a wine shop. The shutters were closed, but the National Guards soon made an entrance with the butt ends of their guns. They found nothing, however, but a few dozen empty bottles and stove-in barrels. This annoyed them so much that they broke with their guns and their feet everything breakable in the shop.

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So it was some time before this very military company came to its destination. The fellows who stood guard at the door of the Hotel de Ville saluted the officer of the company conveying the prisoners. In a little while Saunders and Walter Anderson were conveyed into a large apartment, furnished like a luxurious mercantile office. At the farther end a man sat writing. He did not look up as the prisoners were ranged before him, nor even when the soldiers grounded arms. He was dressed in the uniform of a préfet of the French Republic.

Suddenly he stopped writing, looked up, and motioned the officer to tell his tale.

The officer laid the paper with the signature of Felix Durand on the table, and explained that he had found these two foreigners straying on the fortifications, and that when questioned the old man had produced this paper. The explanation seemed to put the man into a violent passion.

"Felix Durand!" he cried; "we have had enough of him. Who is he to give passports, who resigned from the Committee of Public Safety as soon as the danger began."

Then he looked sternly at the two before him. He rose instantly to his feet, came towards them, and, taking Walter's face in his hand, he roughly raised his chin and looked into his eyes.

"Ha!" he said, in excellent English, "this is beyond all hope. And what might have brought you here—and you, Mr. M'Quhirr; you do me too much honor. We shall have quite a family party."

Even before he spoke Walter had recognized him

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for the man whom he had seen at the little bridge on the Cairn Edward road that day his mother had fainted on the way from the kirk on the hill.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE PRISON OF MAZAS.

HERBERT PEYTON, ex-imperial spy, present right-hand man to Raoul Regnault, the Robespierre of the Commune, sat at his desk in the Hôtel de Ville. His chief had paid him a visit. He mentioned that he had committed to the prison of Mazas two suspicious persons who had been brought in by a company of the Belleville Guard.

"Why have you not shot them?" inquired his chief, affably.

"Sir, they were foreigners," replied the Sous-Préfet.

"It is too far gone now to draw fine distinctions," said his chief. "The barriers have been broken, and the Rurals are in Paris. Soon it will be 'devil take the hindmost.'"

At this point a National Guard without his helmet, and with a rusty bandage about his eye, burst into the room without knocking.

"The Versaillists are in Paris, citizens," he cried. "The tricolor floats on the Arc de Triomphe—their batteries are sweeping the Place de la Concorde."

Raoul Regnault started, and swore a great oath.

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"Now at last it is death and fire," he said; "let us pay off our old scores quickly, and then with barricade and petroleum flask perish on the ruins of blazing Paris."

"In the meantime,' said Herbert Peyton, whom we need not refer to under under his present *alias*, since he changed his name oftener than his coat, "let us get out a rousing proclamation, and death be the portion of all who will not fight for us."

"That as you will," said Raoul Regnault, turning on his heel and going out.

Having bent to his work for half an hour, Herbert Peyton produced a proclamation which read as follows:

"Parisians! the struggle in which we have engaged cannot be abandoned. The Versailles troops hold a portion of Paris. They must at once be driven out. To arms! To arms! Let Paris bristle with baraicades Let the pavements of the streets be torn up to furnish ammunition and to keep back the invaders. The citizens and citizenesses who refuse their help will be instantly shot. Suspected houses will be set on fire at the first signal given!"

Having sent out this ferocious proclamation, with orders that it should be instantly posted throughout the whole of Paris, Herbert Peyton began to put his possessions together for the purpose of getting out of the city. He had an excellent notion that the game was up. But he would have lunch before anything. He rang the bell. The close-cropped head of Jules from the Midi, that

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excellent waiter and good Communard, appeared at the door.

"Lunch, Jules—a bottle of Nuits, the red seal, and one of the good Volney."

"Certainly, your Excellence—Citoyen, I mean," said Jules. "You will forgive my slipping. Monsieur has the noblest of presences!"

Herbert Peyton smiled. Jules had been very attentive to him.

"You may say good-bye to the Hôtel de Ville, Jules. It will be burned to the ground to-day, and many thousands in this city will never see to-morrow dawn. Here, give this order to the officer on guard."

He scribbled a few words on a sheet of paper, attached the stamp of the Préfecture of Police, and threw it open across the table.

As Jules went out he read the words: "Arrest all persons in the house of Felix Durand, in the Avenue St. Ouen, and convey them without delay to the prison of Mazas." (Signed) The Procurator of the Commune, Raoul Regnault.

The spy had written the order over one of the signatures of the Préfet of the Commune, which lay beside him like infernal blank checks.

Felix Jules from the Midi read it without seeming to cast an eye downwards. The Sous-Préfet watched him keenly, but he went out with the paper in his hand, and without a word he handed it to the officer waiting in the ante-chamber. There was a clatter of arms, an audible grumble from the commanded soldiers at having to go so far, and then the tramp of men died away in the distance. When

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Jules had served the soup he stood behind the great man's chair, and his thoughts galloped swiftly. He could not forestall the soldiers on their errand, but it occurred to him that he might be at the prison of Mazas as soon as the prisoners. When the final course of the lunch was reached, the ex-spy withdrew to conclude his preparations for departure.

Jules slipped upstairs, changed his waiter's clothes for the uniform of an officer of the regulars, and over this he drew the blue blouse and wide cotton trousers of a common workman. These had seen much service. He slipped out quickly, and was soon lost among the crowd of fugitives who were hurrying hither and thither to get away from the sound of firing, which now seemed to increase, and to encircle central Paris like a ring.

Meanwhile, in the prison of Mazas, Walter and his grandfather sat hand in hand. There was only one chair in the little chilly cell, floored with octagonal flags, so Walter sat on Saunders' knee, and they spoke softly of the good times they would have when they returned to the little farm by the waterside, where the sheep were cropping the grass by the side of the brown moors.

"We are in the Lord's hands," said Saunders, "but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

Saunders paused, for the tears stood in his eyes—not for himself, but for this lad of so many prayers and so much promise.

"I wadna be fear't," said Walter, stoutly. "We wad stand thegither and gang thegither to Jesus gin it cam' to that."

The old man held the lad closer in his arms, but

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said no word. The unspoken sympathy between them was too strong for words.

"It's a terrible city, this, like the black city of Lost Souls," said Saunders.

The prison doors were flung open, and they were ordered to come out. They understood the tone, though not the words. Saunders M'Quhirr took Walter's hand, and they went down the staircase, stumbling in the uncertain light. When about half way down the pure air of the outer world met them in the face like a wall. It seemed almost too keen to breathe after the tepid pollution of the cell.

They found themselves in a great bricked yard, the walls rising sheer for twenty feet. The bricks were pitted with bullets. Along the wall there was a row of dark, irregular patches, staining the white dust with a darker crimson.

A company of soldiers like those who had brought them off the ramparts marched into the courtyard with jeer and outcry. Walter burst from the man who held him and ran to his mother. He leapt up to her and clung about her neck. Felix Durand stood and looked on calm as ever. Mary M'Quhirr, with the face of one whose thoughts were fixed on the future, looked across the rubbish-littered prison courtyard, and her eyes met those of her husband in a long, steady look.

Herbert Peyton entered the courtyard smoking a cigar. With a wave of his hand he ordered the soldiers to form into two lines, and motioned the prisoners towards the wall where the dark stains lined the court.

"Now," he said, "many accounts will be settled

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at one volley. It is well to have only one term-time and one pay-day. You'll find that I told you true, Nelly Anderson, when I said that some day I would make you pay sweetly for that knife in my side. Now, you will see your precious cub die first."

It needed the strength of three men to separate mother and son. The spy ordered the men to lead him to the wall apart from the others. Walter stood proudly erect. He only found time to say to his mother :

"Dinna greet, mother. It'll no' be lang an' it'll no' be sair."

There was muttering among the men.

"We should be fighting men, not slaughtering children," they said.

"It is a traitor's nest. They are enemies of the Commune," cried Herbert Peyton. "Shoot the boy down !" he commanded.

No rifle was lifted. He became beside himself with rage. Dropping his hand to his belt, he drew a revolver, and advanced to put it to Walter Anderson's head. The boy looked him calmly in the eye, even when he could see the forefinger twitch on the trigger. Felix Durand broke from the National Guards who held him, and cried :

"This man is a traitor ! He was a Buonapartist spy. I have the papers to prove it. Will you let him kill this innocent little boy—a British subject—for whom his government will make France pay dearly. Listen to me. I am Felix Durand. Thirty years ago I bled for the Republic. Twenty years was I in exile for you. Will you slay me, and let a cur like that live ?"

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The spy turned his pistol from the boy to the old man, but just as he was about to fire the prison gate burst open, and with loud cheers a crowd of soldiers burst in.

"*Vive la ligne!*" cried Felix Durand ("Hurrah for the soldiers of the line!"), and "*Vive la ligne!*" cried the watchers on the housetops, weary with watching for the deliverers. The Communards fell in heaps, many of them at the first fire. Herbert Peyton turned in the last access of despair, and fired his revolver at the rapidly approaching line of regulars. Then he threw up his arms, spun round on one foot, and fell heavily on his face to the earth. An officer with a tricolor sash came toward the pale line of saved prisoners.

"This way," he said, leading the way through the gate. "Let them fight it out. A little blood-letting is always good for Frenchmen!"

It was Jules of the Midi, otherwise Jacob Bergmann of the German Intelligence Corps.

CHAPTER XLIX.

ALL THINGS NEW.

It was again high summertide in Galloway. July burned passionate in every hedgerow. Roses white and red clambered and blossomed over them, making a tangled patchwork with Starwort and Ragged Robin. A fresh breeze blew down the

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valley of the Ken—that equal blowing northern wind with the edge on it which puts men in the humor for work and wins the meadow hay, making every hour that it blows worth a peck of golden sovereigns. The little farm of Drumquhat nestled white among its oaks and beeches under the moors. Its new coat of whitewash almost dazzled the eye, and the Sabbath silence was so restful that the only sound was the bleat of a ewe calling her lamb on the hill and the morning hum of the bees setting out on their freebooting among the flowers. From our place up on the hillside we can look down on the blessed quiet of the little farm and up at the great arch of blue sky buttressed on one side by the great ridges of Screel and Ben Gairn far to the south, and upheld round the northern horizon by the three Cairnsmuirs and the billowy forms of the Kells range.

We take our places in the high corner of the moor, where, in the angle of the great march dyke, Archie Grierson has constructed his hill study. That young man has been here this morning ever since the breaking of the day, for expectation has made his night sleepless. He had seen Saunders M'Quhirr move out, leaning a trifle more heavily on his staff than of old, to his corner of quiet prayer. He has seen Mary M'Quhirr go to the byre with her attendant maiden, and in a little Walter Anderson sturdily take the hill with his dogs. It is his pride to look the sheep by himself. Then the two younger sons, Rab and James, have each gone out and come in, one from the stable and the other from the fields. Over all broods the spirit of Sabbath

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consecration. The larks in the lift, the bees in the heather, the lambs in the pasture make melody each in his place, and the heart of Archie Grierson also sings a song. And the reason of the song is that, late in the gloaming of the night before, Nelly Anderson put both her hands in his and promised that she would commit her life to him—Walter, the stripling, adding a glad-eyed entreaty.

It had been settled that Walter was to go to school in Cairn Edward, to that fine scholar and noble character who set his mark so deep on the best of the Cairn Edward youth, so that wherever they may sojourn they will not forget the counsel and example of John Constable, head master of the Cairn Edward Institution. Since the return from Paris it had become generally known that Walter Anderson who dwelt at Drumquhat with his mother, was none other than Walter Anderson of Deeside. Among other arrangements, Felix Durand had by friendly suit and mutual agreement cleared this matter to the satisfaction of all. As Walter's guardian he had insisted on the boy and his mother taking up their abode in the old house to which Walter had come in such strange fashion so long ago ; but Walter had point blank refused to leave his " gran," save and except for the purpose of going to school ; and his mother had other purposes in her mind, for the long latent love of Archie Grierson was stirring within her the consciousness of new possibilities of life to herself and help to others—at once an atonement and a compensation for the mistakes and unhappinesses of her life. Archie Grierson had been called to a little church in the valley of the Dee,

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where, in sobriety and poverty, a few faithful folk worshipped the Lord. With the income which the assiduity and French carefulness of Felix Durand had assured to her, Archie and she would be very happy. It was in order to walk with her to the little church of Whinnyliggate that Archie had been waiting so long. The mellow tones of its bell, the clearest and finest in the countryside, floated up to him in his high corner at eight o'clock, and shortly after he had heard the echoes of its joyful noise die into silence, a collie dog suddenly came storming boisterously over the dyke in the lee of which he was sitting, and immediately his friend, Aleck M'Quhirr, followed. Without expressing any surprise at finding him there, he came and sat down beside him.

There was no greeting between the friends, save that Archie made room for Aleck by his side.

"Come in, h'yer!" said the latter to his dog, which was inclined to go careering along the hare tracks.

The collie obediently came and lay down at his feet.

"Old man settled in Cairn Edward yet?" queried Archie at last.

"Ay," said Aleck; "he said that he had made eneuch siller, an' that the lasses were plaguin' him to tak' that new hoose beside the railway brig in the toun, that has sic a heartsome view o' the station platform and the goods shed; so he juist took it at the short hand, an' left Nancy an' me wi' Nether Neuk; 'for,' said he, 'gin ye are to gang in thegither we may juist begin afore haytime; I'm

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no' gaun to slave a' simmer for you to be idle a' winter.' So Nancy and me were mairriet as sune as they got hame frae Payris, an' the auld man flittit as sune as he got the furniture bocht for Station View—that's the braw new hoose in at the heid o' the toun. The lasses said that the auld things frae here wadna be mensefu' in a new hoose, so everything's to be new an' o' the best. Peter Chrystie has had his buyin' coat on for some weeks noo," said his son-in-law, chuckling.

"Aleck, I'm to be mairriet, too," said Archie, blushing.

"To Nelly?" said Archie, not at all surprised.

Archie nodded.

"That's what Nancy said mair nor twa year sin'. I didna believe her, but she was richt for a' that. It's anither lesson to me," said Aleck, solemnly. "But come awa' doon to the hoose. Hae ye had yer breakfast?"

"I had nae mind o't," said Archie, solemnly, but rising, nothing loath.

So the two went their way down to the farm, and Aleck stopped outside to talk to his mother, letting Archie go in alone. As he passed through the dusky kitchen his heart beat faster, and at the door of the "room" he paused a moment expectantly. In a moment Nelly Anderson came to him with the joy of surrender brimming in her eyes. Archie took a step forward, and as simply and innocently as a child she gave herself into his arms.

That day Walter sat with his hand in Archie Grierson's in the little church of Whinnyliggate to which the whole family, except Saunders, himself,

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had gone, to do honor to the occasion of the last time when the young minister was to sit as a member in the little church which he had attended so long. He was to be ordained the following week, and married the week after. But Saunders said :

"Weel wad I like to come, but it will be more seemly for me that's an office-bearer to worship in my own congregation."

So he yoked the brown mare and drove the red cart all the way to the church in Cairn Edward. The folk from Drumquhat filled two whole pews in the little church of Whinnyliggate. In the pew immediately in front of them was a company of four, no other than Sawny Bean and his wife, both in decent black, the "Hoolet" and "Deil", in apparel for which they were indebted to the clever needle of Nancy M'Quhirr, late Chrystie, who with her husband sat opposite in the blushful consciousness of recent bridehood. The "Hoolet" took one quick look round to see if the "French lassie" was there. She felt instinctively where Walter sat, and as soon as she knew that her rival was absent she smoothed her elf locks and turned all her attention to her Psalm-book.

So they all stood up and sang with all their hearts :

"All people that on earth do dwell
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice ;
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell,
Come ye before Him and rejoice."

And as the congregation gripped the great swing

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of the melody after turning the corner of the second line, Nelly Anderson looked into the eyes of her lover, and knew that the old things had passed away and that all things had become new.

THE END.

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